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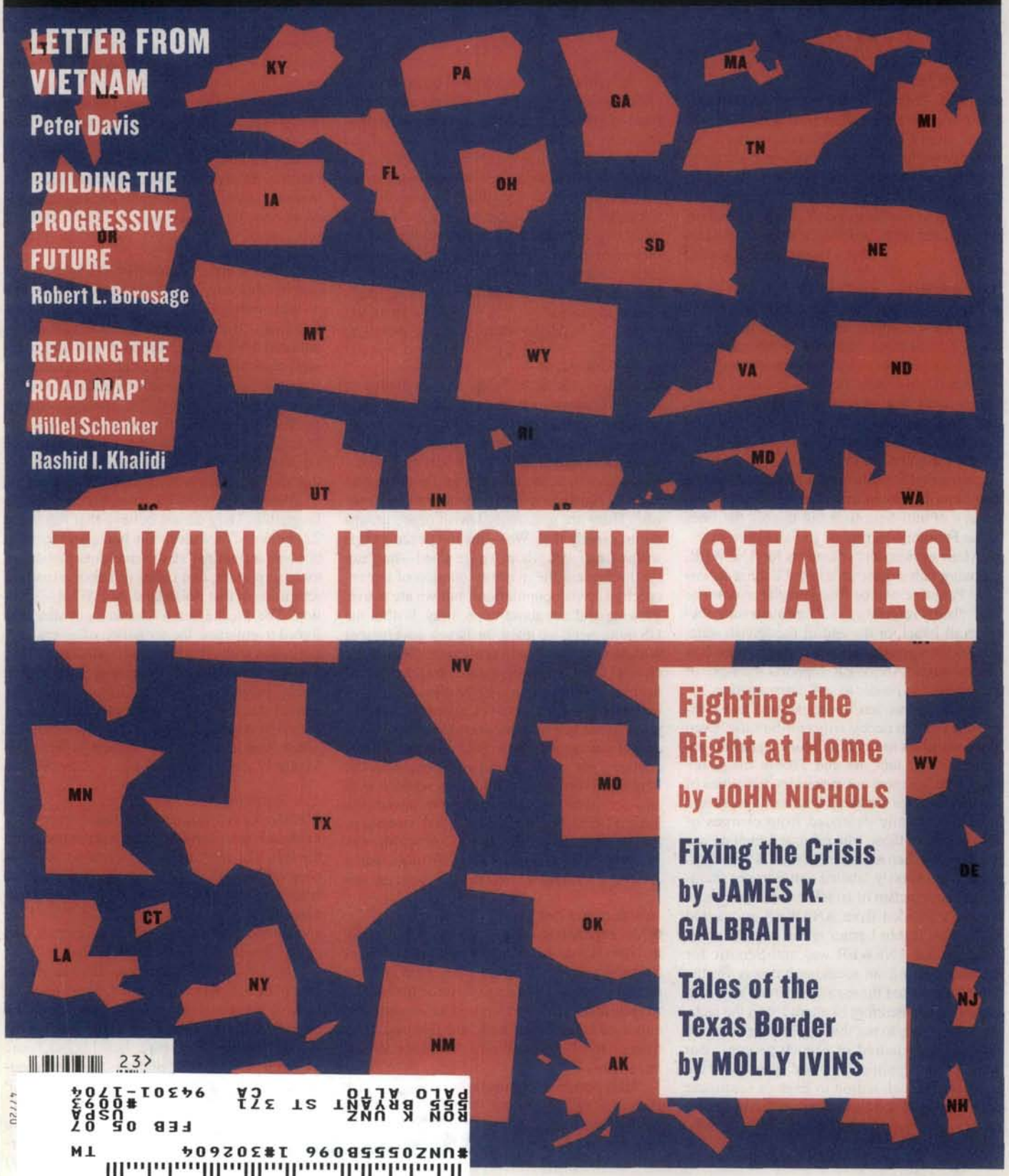

TAKING IT TO THE STATES

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The Green Line...

Amherst, Mass.

■ I thank Philip Green for "'Anti-Semitism,' Israel and the Left" [May 5]. It was refreshing to see what I have long felt but not been eloquent enough to express. I will send a copy to my grandmother, hoping now she'll see that it's not that I hate Israel or my heritage but that I don't exculpate myself, my people or my government when pointing a finger at what is wrong. MARA FRANCESCA MACARIO

San Francisco

■ If Philip Green had thought to ask Rabbi Lerner a few simple questions before writing, he might have learned that none of the traditional categories he lays out to confirm or deny the anti-Semitism charge fit the accusation Rabbi Lerner made. One who states, as Dr. Green does, that "anti-Semitism—the real thing...had (and has) nothing to do with Israel or Zionism," merely turns the "crude equation" on its head, implying that *no* criticism of Israel can ever be anti-Semitic. Green searches the forest of the history of anti-Semitism but misses the trees at the February 16 protest in San Francisco.

Many workers and volunteers for ANSWER, the major rally organizer, sported T-shirts declaring, "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea," clearly referring to a Palestinian state covering all Israel, or the end of the Jewish state. ANSWER's position on Israel's *right to exist* is this evasion: "ANSWER supports the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination."

Rabbi Lerner has never claimed that criticism of Israel is necessarily anti-Semitic. Even allusions to his use of this "crude equation" are ludicrous. In fact, he and *Tikkun* magazine have been the most outspoken Jewish critics of Israel's policies for the past twenty years and have consistently defended from charges of anti-Semitism those who critique Israeli policy. It was only when members of the Tikkun Community (recklessly labeled anti-Semites themselves for criticism of Israel) complained about feeling excluded from ANSWER-sponsored rallies that Rabbi Lerner spoke out. He never claimed that ANSWER was anti-Semitic for excluding him from speaking but only for the way it conducted these rallies. Green's closing analogy must therefore be altered to fit the facts. He states, "We do not think political attacks on France imply hatred of French people." But what if these "political attacks" questioned the right of a French nation to exist (a sentiment much closer to the aims of those Rabbi Lerner spoke out against)? The analogy breaks down and the hatred is clear.

Anti-Semitism arguments aside, it is astonishing to hear a *Nation* editorial board member speaking as though it were 100 percent legitimate to exclude from a rally presenting itself as "the antiwar movement" a speaker critical of one of its organizers. It is a sad comment on the left when we can no longer see the perversity in the ways ANSWER ran its rallies, or how destructive its exclusion of Lerner was to the credibility of all who opposed the war. If the left is to be a movement describing a more just, inclusive and caring society, it must overcome its fear of debate and criticism and seek to embody the ideals it aims to spread. EVAN J. DERKACZ
Media editor, Tikkun Community

Cambridge, Mass.

■ I'd add a sidebar to Philip Green's citation of Eric Hobsbawm's argument that "the first duty of a Jewish intellectual is to oppose Jewish nationalism; just as...the first duty of a Jewish-American intellectual is to oppose American nationalism—or both nationalisms, for those who identify equally strongly as American and Jewish." There are grassroots Jewish peace groups doing exactly that. We—like the peace groups within Israel with whom we are allied—may not (yet) represent the majority opinion of our respective Jewish populations, but we are active, growing and not about to go away. Within the US movement, we insist the Israeli government withdraw all forces and settlements behind the Green Line (or an alternative) and that an independent Palestinian state be allowed to form under UN auspices. Some of us demand that our government stop military aid to Israel until withdrawal is achieved. We wish to demonstrate that opposing the criminal, militarist policies of the Israeli government should not be equated with anti-Semitism, any more than the movements against US wars in Vietnam, Central America or Iraq implied anti-Americanism. ALAN MEYERS
Visions of Peace With Justice in Israel/Palestine; www.vopj.org

New Haven, Conn.

■ My experience organizing an antiwar rally in New Haven in February showed me anti-Semitism on the left does exist. One speaker turned out to have links to a Holocaust-denial website and to have been co-editor of a site that endorsed suicide bombing and featured a list titled, "Ten Reasons Why It's Kosher to Kill Israeli Jews."

Such positions, fortunately, are still unusual. But consider this position, far more common on the left: that Israel does not simply have reprehensible policies but is *fundamentally* a criminal and terrorist state that should not, and should never have, existed. According to this view, of all nationalisms, Jewish nationalism is uniquely evil; and of all states, the Jewish state is illegitimate. This position, which ignores centuries of Jewish persecution, exile and, finally, genocide, seems very close to old-fashioned hatred of Jews as Jews. It is certainly possible to criticize Israel's actions and policies and not be anti-Semitic. But there are those on the left and in the antiwar movement who go beyond such legitimate, necessary criticisms. JAMES BERGER

Potrero, Calif.

■ Philip Green is correct that Michael Lerner and his defenders have not been able to give a single example of ANSWER's alleged anti-Semitism. But many members of the International ANSWER coalition do not accept Israel's right to exist, and for Lerner this denial of Israel's legitimacy "can only be understood as... underlying anti-Semitism." Curiously, Lerner is far more honest than the typical Israel supporter and has acknowledged that the Zionists stole the land from the Palestinians. But he justifies that theft as "affirmative action" for Jews.

Many in ANSWER find his arguments laughable. They do not believe that returning 22 percent of the Palestinian homeland so it can become a nominal state represents justice or, more important, that Likud or Labor intends to return any of that stolen land. ANSWER's solution? The one the South African racist state was forced to embrace: the formation of an egalitarian nation with all inhabitants—Muslims, Jews, Christians, everyone—guaranteed the same rights. Does that mean the dissolution of the Jewish state of Israel? Yes, it sure does. Count me as one American Jew who says the sooner the better. And if that makes me an anti-Semite in Michael Lerner's eyes, so be it. STEVE KOWIT

New Rochelle, NY

■ Philip Green misses the reason liberal-to-moderate American Jews have lost patience with the left: The left's culpability lies not with its overt actions but with its inaction against those who truly are anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist. Countless campus and political activities here and abroad have been openly anti-Israel as well as anti-Semitic. The left has been silent.

Despite Green's contentions that many Jews are not pro–Israel's government, most Jews *are* fiercely pro-Israel. We also are pro-peace. But we are not blind to history or to the fact that the PA and Arafat are corrupt. Israel is our home as much as the United States is, and we recognize that Hamas, Hezbollah, Fatah and the PFLP must be stopped. The left is silent or apologist.

Thus, American Jews, myself included, have been forced to conclude that the left is not inter-

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EDITORIALS

Losing Iraq?

Is it too soon to ask, Who lost Iraq? War critics and skeptics should not be hurling I-told-you-so's yet. But many of the serious questions they raised before the invasion (apart from why it was justified in the first place) have turned out to be questions for which the war planners of the Bush Administration—and we use the word "planners" hesitantly—had no answers.

They had no plan for providing security and countering the lawlessness and disorder that some Pentagon officials foresaw. They had no plan for managing a political transition that would entail more than directing the "dancing in the streets" Iraqis toward elections. They had no plan for insuring the supply of essential services. They had no plan for maintaining the health system (let alone guarding hospitals in addition to the oil ministry). They had no plan for restoring the economy and getting the oil industry up and running smoothly under Iraqi control. They had no comprehensive plan for quickly finding and securing the weapons of mass destruction they claimed were in Iraq or the nuclear material—of value to anyone looking to make a nuclear bomb or merely a dirty bomb—that was known to be present at various nuclear facilities. And they had no clue that Shiites would quickly develop a political force demanding power and a quick end to the US occupation—even though experts on the region warned that this would be likely.

There's more. Team Bush—and its think-tank and op-ed colleagues—claimed that victory in Iraq would lead to democracy throughout the region, would pressure terrorists and would ease the path to resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Weeks ago, flush with military success in Iraq, Bush proclaimed Al Qaeda to be "on the run" and "not a problem anymore." The early returns from Israel, Saudi Arabia and Morocco are not encouraging.

All this leads to a postwar question: What went wrong? Not in Iraq—which was, sadly, predictable—but in Washington. Why did Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and others not prepare adequately for the challenges? Did they believe their own PR about "cakewalks" and celebrating Iraqis? Was Rumsfeld too obsessed with winning the war his way—with a lighter force that would be less able to police the country after the war? Did they not truly care about those WMDs (and the 5,000-year-old artifacts at the national museum)? Was the intelligence bad? Or did the policy-makers ignore intelligence and base life-and-death decisions on their own prejudices and wishful thinking?

These and other questions deserve responses. It might be too much to expect the Republicans who control Congress to inconvenience Bush the Conqueror with forceful hearings, though Republican Senators Pete Domenici and Richard Lugar have gently expressed concern. Democrats in and out of the 2004 contest have started to poke cautiously at the President, who, along with his war, continues to score high in the polls. Many in the news media have done well in reporting postwar problems. But there is the possibility that attention will fade (cf. Afghanistan).

Bush, no doubt, would like to move on. True patriots, though, should insist on accountability. In order to plot a future course, in Iraq and elsewhere, we have to understand fully what went wrong—and what is still going wrong—with Bush's war.

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COMMENT

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Building to Win

These are dog days for Democrats. The top-gun President continues to ride high in the polls, despite the chaos in Iraq. The Rolls-Royce reactionaries who control Washington lavish tax breaks and no-bid contracts on those who pay for their party. The Democratic presidential candidates spend energy debating who is "electable" rather than where they want to take the country. And, inevitably, the poisonous sectarians of the Democratic Leadership Council have launched their annual corporate fundraising drive by trashing "elitist, interest-group liberalism." At least they provide unwitting comic relief by asserting that the only electable Democrats are Bush-lite politicians like their own unlikely Joe Lieberman, tireless tribune of the CEO stock option, censorious scold of the Lynne Cheney–William Bennett school of moral indignation and hairshirt preacher of fiscal austerity in the face of global deflation. "Real Democrats," DLC's leaders Al From and Bruce Reed helpfully inform us in their most recent memo, "are real people." Thanks for that.

Progressives would profit more by studying the way the New Right responded to life in the political wilderness. In the mid-1970s, Richard Nixon was exiled in disgrace and Democrats controlled everything—the presidency, both houses of Congress and the judiciary. The liberal era that conservatives had hoped to end seemed to have new life. At that moment, New Right strategists made two major decisions: to build an independent capacity to drive their message, their values and their movement into the political debate and to take over the Republican Party from green-eyeshade moderates and make it their vehicle. The New Right scorned the Republican DLCs of the time and instead built an independent, cause-based political movement.

New Right donors—Coors, Mellon Scaife, Richardson and others—didn't pour their money into places like the American Enterprise Institute, the established voice of corporate America. Instead they funded the openly right-wing Heritage Foundation, which redbaited liberal leaders; championed Star Wars, supply-side economics and school vouchers; and assailed welfare, abortion rights and affirmative action. Heritage minted not new policy ideas but timely political ammunition—message, propaganda lines, factoids—to arm New Right legislators and activists, and it aggressively promoted its advocates on op-ed pages and talk shows.

Rather than invest primarily in the Republican Party, the New Right backed the Moral Majority, galvanizing the emerging right-wing evangelical movement under the leadership of Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and others to preach family values and opposition to abortion. It built its own network of independent PACs, led by the National Conservative Political Action Committee. Aided by Richard Viguerie's innovative direct-mail operation, it forged an independent capacity to recruit and train candidates who shared its values. For the most part, New Right adherents rejected third-party politics as likely to prolong liberal dominance and made the GOP their vehicle, with Ronald Reagan as their champion.

The result not only transformed the Republican Party, it helped produce a sea change in American politics, driving the debate to

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the right and creating the basis for the conservative era that has defined the past twenty years of American politics. And trimmers like the DLC drifted further and further to the right in an elusive search for the "center" of American politics.

The rise of the New Right wasn't solely due to its own organizing. Liberalism failed to meet the challenges facing the country in the 1970s—stagflation, growing pressures on families, America held hostage. And the successes—and excesses—of the triumphant movements of the 1960s generated a furious reaction that fueled New Right organizing. But it was only by organizing independently that the right was able to grab the opportunity created by these dynamics.

Today, conservatism is failing to meet the challenges facing the country: global stagnation and instability, inequality, corporate corruption, pressures on families, America terrorized. And the excesses of the self-described "movement conservatives" who dominate this Administration are generating an impassioned response from the besieged—the women's, civil rights, antiwar, environmental and union movements.

Progressives have only begun to build the independent capacity to drive this energy into the political debate. Democrats are creating a well-funded center to promote an aggressive Democratic message against Bush that will be headed by John Podesta, Bill Clinton's skilled former Chief of Staff. But progressives should focus on building up independent institutions like the Economic Policy Institute, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Institute for America's Future (of which I am co-director) that will challenge conservative ideology frontally while providing ideas and ammunition for progressives. Just as Viguerie pioneered direct-mail building and funding the New Right, MoveOn.org, Working Assets and other groups are pioneering new web-based communications and fundraising to help build the new progressive activism. And just as the New Right created the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition to mobilize new activists and voters, unions are building independent vehicles to reach beyond union members, including the Partnership for America's Families, headed by former AFL-CIO political director Steve Rosenthal, which will focus on registering and engaging African-Americans, Latinos and working women in contested presidential states.

Progressive political action groups include, notably, the powerhouse EMILY's List, which is responding to the threat posed to choice and women's rights by working with the progressive community to build women's political clout at the state and federal level. Progressive Majority, headed by Gloria Totten, is launching a sophisticated plan to recruit, train and support the next generation of Paul Wellstones while extending its network of web-based small donors who can provide seed funds for progressive challengers. And the new Wellstone Action, a new center formed by his family and friends, will train organizers for grassroots issue campaigns and organizing drives.

In Congress, progressive leaders, including Dick Durbin and Jon Corzine in the Senate and Jan Schakowsky and George Miller in the House, have launched independent efforts to take off the gloves and challenge the extremism and the corruption of this Administration. Backed by a coordinated message, aggressive communications strategies and targeted issue campaigns, they will help generate the "echo effect" so vital to driving an argument through the noise of the media.

"Real issues" about "real people" are at stake, as the DLC's memo so helpfully informs us. But movement conservatives won't be dislodged by the DLC's politics of pander and positioning. Instead we need to return to a politics of passion and principle that asserts our values, our ideas and our energy, and develop the independent capacity to drive our causes into the political debate and the electoral arena. ROBERT L. BOROSAGE

Robert L. Borosage is co-director of the Campaign for America's Future.

Guantánamo Gulag

Whatever happened to the "worst of the worst"? When the military started bringing captives to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in January 2002, it claimed that the detainees were dedicated to killing millions of Americans, and so suicidal that they would "gnaw through the hydraulic lines" of their transport plane to bring it down. Yet in recent weeks, the military has released eighteen detainees from Guantánamo, bringing to thirty-six the total number it has permitted to check out of Camp Delta since it opened. If they were the "worst of the worst," why have forty-two now been allowed to go free?

Unless we are to believe that the military is intentionally setting loose suicidal killers bent on murdering us, the only conclusion one can draw is that the military's initial assessment of a significant number of detainees was mistaken. Other reports confirm that conclusion. Military officials have admitted that there are in fact no "big fish" on Guantánamo and that many of the detainees may be there by mistake. Some were brought in for rewards by bounty-hunters. One of the men released claimed to be over 100 years old. And in recent weeks, the military has confirmed that among the detainees still held are juveniles as young as 13. The worst of the worst?

These developments only underscore the legal and moral bankruptcy of the government's position on the Guantánamo detainees. From the outset the Bush Administration has invoked the law of war to justify their detention but has refused to comply with the most basic obligations of that law. It is true, as the Administration argues, that the law of war permits detention of "enemy combatants" for the duration of a conflict and that those who violate the laws of war are "unprivileged" combatants not entitled to prisoner-of-war status. But where there is any doubt about a detainee's status, the Geneva Conventions require a hearing before a competent tribunal—hearings we have routinely held in prior conflicts.

The Administration claims it has determined categorically that all Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters were "unprivileged combatants" and therefore no purpose would be served by holding such hearings. But that assumes everyone held at Guantánamo was fighting for the Taliban or Al Qaeda. As the military's recent releases suggest, some detainees may not have been "combatants" at all.

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COMMENT

The federal courts have thus far refused even to consider the claims of those seeking to challenge the treatment of the Guantánamo detainees. On May 19 the Supreme Court declined to review one such case. Other challenges are sure to follow, but the Court's decision in April on the rights of immigrants in the United States does not bode well for such review.

In *Demore v. Kim*, the Court, by a five-to-four vote, upheld a 1996 statute mandating preventive detention of certain immigrants placed in deportation proceedings for having committed crimes. The statute mandates detention even where, as in Kim's case, the government agrees that detention is not necessary. For the first time ever outside the war setting, the Court upheld categorical preventive detention without any individualized assessment of the need for detention. And the Court reached its result by expressly invoking a double standard, claiming that in regulating immigration, "Congress regularly makes rules that would be unacceptable if applied to citizens." If the Court takes that attitude toward permanent resident immigrants, imagine its views on "the worst of the worst."

Colin Powell recently weighed in on the situation, writing Donald Rumsfeld to express his concern, not about the blatant injustice of the situation but about the pesky complaints he receives from many of our closest allies about our treatment of their citizens on Guantánamo. But as this Administration has shown, complaints from the rest of the world are virtually certain to fall on deaf ears. The limbo that is Guantánamo, like the war on terrorism, has no end in sight. This is perversely fitting, for Guantánamo is the perfect symbol of what the Administration wants generally in the war on terrorism—the authority to act without the constraints of law. DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu), The Nation*'s legal affairs correspondent, is the co-author of* Terrorism and the Constitution: Sacrificing Civil Liberties in the Name of National Security *(First Amendment Foundation).*

CALVIN TRILLIN

THOUGHTS OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN GEORGE W. BUSH'S AIR NATIONAL GUARD UNIT BUT CAN'T SEEM TO REMEMBER SEEING HIM AROUND

When he lands on the deck in his flight suit
To impress all the sailors he's greeting,
It looks grand, but there's one thing we're thinking:
Does this count, then, as making a meeting?

An Energy/Jobs Program

America needs jobs, and working families are hurting. At the same time, the war in Iraq has heightened awareness of our dependence on foreign oil and the vulnerability of our energy system. The time is right for a national commitment to energy independence on the scale of John Kennedy's Apollo Project, which put a man on the moon. A bold program to advance energy efficiency and promote renewable energy, like wind and solar power, and drive investment into new technology and public infrastructure would create 2 million jobs and offer stimulus to our flagging economy.

At the time of the 1973 oil embargo, the United States imported 35 percent of its petroleum. Today we import well over half. Since we consume a quarter of the world's oil yet have only 3 percent of its reserves, there's no way we can solve this problem with more drilling at home. But our problems go deeper than oil: We use 25 percent of the world's energy, nearly three times the amount of any other country, while deregulation has upset the energy sector and environmental impacts threaten to limit our growth.

For too long, Democrats have allowed the GOP to exploit old fault lines between economic populists and environmentalists, pitting jobs against the environment. But an energy Apollo project represents good policy and good politics. Clean energy means jobs rebuilding the infrastructure of our cities, supplying new markets for leading-edge technology and using skilled labor and ingenuity to replace waste and pollution. At a time when states and cities are struggling under the worst fiscal crisis since World War II, investing in energy savings offers both stimulus and budget relief. In the manufacturing sector, which has suffered 75 percent of the 2.7 million private-sector jobs lost since George W. Bush took office, new investment in energy efficiency could anchor existing plants and create demand for American-made technology.

A recent poll in the swing state of Pennsylvania showed strong approval among voters—72 percent supported a federal program to invest $200–$300 billion in energy independence. Even more striking, support for an energy Apollo program jumped to 81 percent among non–college educated Democratic white men—a segment of the population that often breaks with progressives and that could determine the outcome of the next election. These "Reagan Democrats" have been burned by the current economy, and they respond to a message of hope for good jobs and reinvestment. Democratic presidential candidates, led by Dick Gephardt and John Kerry, have made major policy addresses calling for large-scale public programs to achieve energy independence. Gephardt predicts that "alternative energy has the potential to be America's largest growth market and job producer in the next ten years."

An Apollo project is attractive to swing voters, but it would also unite the progressive base. By focusing on good jobs and new investment to solve persistent energy and environmental problems, Apollo offers common ground both for labor unions and for environmental advocates. "By building fuel cells and wind turbines, by retooling American plants with efficient technologies, we can create good jobs, a strong economy and a sound environment," contends Tom Buffenbarger, president of the International Associ-

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COMMENT

ation of Machinists. Says Steelworkers president Leo Gerard, "In the face of a trading system that's devastating both workers and the environment, an Apollo project for energy independence has the potential to unite trade unionists and environmentalists in building an economy that values every worker's right to bargain for a decent living and every citizen's right to live in a healthier world."

So what might an Apollo project for energy independence look like? The New Growth Initiative, a joint project of the Institute for America's Future and the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, has laid out a bold $300 billion plan for the next ten years. It would be broad-based, sharing the benefits of investment widely across the economy while insuring that no single sector bears all the costs. And it would be immediate, deploying proven and cost-effective technologies that exist today, not placing all our hopes on long-term R&D, like the Bush plan for a hydrogen "freedom car."

Such an Apollo project would promote renewable energy sources like wind and solar. It would convert assembly lines to put American-made cars using advanced technology on the road. It would help older plants improve their environmental performance, preserving domestic manufacturing jobs. It would deploy new technology for pollution control as well as research how to capture carbon from coal plants, and it would invest in research and development to deploy hydrogen fuel cells.

The Apollo project would promote high-performance "green" building and push a new generation of energy-efficient appliances to market—driving up efficiency without driving jobs overseas. It would support smart growth and mass transit, increase brownfield redevelopment and rebuild transportation and water infrastructure, relieving municipal budget pressures. And an Apollo project would strengthen, not repeal, regulatory protections for consumers, workers and the environment.

Unlike tax cuts for the rich, investing in new construction and deployment of new technology would offer real stimulus to help working families and people in need. As Michael Sullivan, president of the Sheetmetal Workers' International Association, says, "We need to rebuild and revitalize our economy. Working toward energy independence will make a giant contribution toward that end—it means more economic security, lower energy costs and healthier environments. The Apollo project offers a long-term solution for energy independence that reinvests in communities and the future of our nation."

The Apollo Alliance—a broad coalition including labor unions, green groups, consumer advocates and socially responsible businesses—is now forming (www.apolloalliance.org) and will be unveiled at a major conference in June. By building on the example of past national challenges, the Apollo project reminds us that the public is ready for Democrats to be Democrats again, facing tough problems and believing again in the power of collective action. Americans are ready to pull together and get to work for the good of the economy, the nation and the planet. BRACKEN HENDRICKS

Bracken Hendricks, director of the New Growth Initiative, served the Clinton Administration as a special assistant for the Commerce Department and the office of the Vice President.

In Fact . . .

SPANISH ONION

Abby Aguirre writes: It's been known to happen: An unsuspecting editor runs a piece from America's satirical tabloid *The Onion* as a straight story. On May 4, readers of *ABC*, Spain's second-largest daily, learned that the next ruler of Iraq would be determined by the new Fox reality show *Appointed by America*. Following *The Onion*'s lead, *ABC* reported that the winner of *Elegido por América* would be named president of Iraq in a season finale broadcast live from Baghdad on June 24 and that hopeful contestant Kymbyrley Lake, a cashier from Texas, was convinced she would win. The only thing more disconcerting than *ABC*'s not realizing the piece was satirical is that somehow the story didn't make front-page news.

SHAREHOLDERS ARISE!

Shareholder activism, fueled by corporate scandals and economic downturn, generated a record number of resolutions during the recent annual meeting cycle—most related to corporate governance issues. Bloated executive salaries and golden parachutes were prominent targets. In England, US-style executive perks in the form of a fat retirement package for the CEO of the English company GlaxoSmithKline were nixed by shareholders. In another development, after a number of big corporations, including Citigroup, Verizon and GM, urged shareholders to tell their Congressperson to support the repeal of the dividend tax, an outraged shareholder contacted Responsible Wealth, which published on the web a petition opposing the cut. It drew more than 600 signers (www.faireconomy.org).

AWARDS TIME

Victor Navasky, *Nation* publisher and editorial director, and *Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel were awarded the Joseph Callaway Prize for the Defense of the Right to Privacy by the New York Civil Liberties Union. The two were recognized for "outstanding contributions to raising public awareness about the importance of privacy rights." • The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) has awarded Katrina vanden Heuvel its Voices of Peace Award. These are given to individuals and organizations who "are actively engaged in working toward peaceful conflict resolution." The ADC praised the magazine's "accurate media coverage," particularly during the war on Iraq.

NEWS OF THE WEAK IN REVIEW

"And I said on my program, if, if the Americans go in and overthrow Saddam Hussein and it's clean, he has nothing, I will apologize to the nation, and I will not trust the Bush Administration again." —Fox News's Bill O'Reilly, on *Good Morning America*, March 18 (from William Chirolas)

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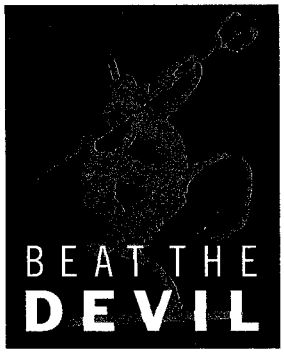
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Now, Gods, Stand Up for Fakers!



Thank God for fakers! Matchless as deflaters of human and institutional pretension, they furnish us rich measures of malicious glee at the red-faced victims. Pause here to honor Konrad Kujau, whose forged Hitler diaries burst upon the world twenty years ago, fooling the editors of *Stern*, and of *Newsweek*.

Kujau churned out the diaries in longhand in the back of his shop in Stuttgart, slopping tea over the pages to lend the requisite touch of antiquity, spurring his weary imagination to such daily entries as "Meet all the leaders of the Storm Troopers in Bavaria, give them medals.... Must not forget tickets for the Olympic Games for Eva.... Because of the new pills I have violent flatulence, and—says Eva—bad breath."

Kujau never did get his Gothic lettering right and used the initials F.H. instead of A.H. It didn't make any difference. *Stern*'s experts pronounced them genuine and so, to his lifelong embarrassment, did the late Lord Dacre, *a k a* Hugh Trevor-Roper, who, as the designated expert hired by Rupert Murdoch's London *Sunday Times*, gave them his scholarly endorsement.

Faker du jour is Jayson Blair, the disgraced *New York Times* reporter. I give him an F for lack of ambition in the faker's arts. He exhibited the caution of the tyro: a faked quote here, an imagined description there, a paragraph or two of sedate plagiarism. In its heyday, half a century ago, *Time* magazine reinvented the world in a weird elliptical style. Blair's timid inventions are testimony to the banality of today's journalese, by which our own Gothic world is tamed in the interests of corporate capital on a daily basis.

Circumspectly ambitious as only a *Times*-man can be, Blair served just the sort of fare that would please his bosses, not least the *Times*'s executive editor, Howell Raines. Blair's finest hour, fabricating background and unattributed quotes from cops and prosecutors amid the media maelstrom after the arrest of the Washington snipers, came, I hear, because Raines sent him down from New York, hoping that scoops from Blair would upstage the *Times*'s Washington bureau and thus advance Raines's intrigue to replace its current chief with one of his own toadies. Blair obediently rose to the occasion.

How Blair must be chafing at the unfairness of it all! Why him? He makes up a few blind quotes from high-level FBI officials and prosecutors, and the skies fall in. He even has to endure the indignity of having William Safire, unindicted besmircher of a thousand reputations, pontificating about journalistic integrity. Where are the whole special supplements of the *New York Times* that would be required to apologize for its baseless insinuations against Wen Ho Lee (a Jeff Gerth special, written with James Risen and abetted by William Safire), or against the Clintons for their real estate dealings in Whitewater (another Jeff Gerth special)?

The *Times* went overboard with its four pages on Blair's deceptions, but the overkill, as no doubt publisher Arthur Sulzberger and Raines knew, has played to their paper's long-term advantage. The more voluminous the sackcloth, the more nobly impressive the sinner, and the profuse deployment of sackcloth and ashes serves, albeit on a grander scale, the same function as the daily Corrections box, which notes minor errors. The unstated implication with these corrections is that everything else that appeared in those editions of the *Times* was true.

There's been a campaign to get Walter Duranty's Pulitzer rescinded, for obscuring Stalin's crimes, a move I oppose because such a rescission would have the same effect as that Corrections box, insinuating that all other Pulitzers are deserved. I do make an exception in the case of Thomas Friedman, whose three Pulitzers do have the utility of reminding us that he's at least three times more of a blowhard than any other pundit in the field.

It's not the first time the paper has opted for overkill. I remember a *Times* editorial back in 1982, commenting on what began with my own exposé of Christopher Jones, who had written an article in *The New York Times Magazine* about a visit to Cambodia during which he claimed to have seen Pol Pot through binoculars.

In this same piece Jones made the mistake of lifting an entire paragraph from André Malraux's novel *La Voie Royale*. I pointed this out in my column in the *Village Voice*, adding the obvious point that Jones's binoculars must have been extremely powerful to have allowed him to recognize Pol Pot, let alone describe his eyes as "dead and stony." My item stirred the *Washington Post* to point an accusing finger. Then the *Times* itself unleashed a huge investigation of the wretched Jones and ran a pompous editorial proclaiming that "it may not be too much to say that, ultimately, it debases democracy."

I remember thinking at the time that as a democracy debaser, Jones looked like pretty small potatoes. Back then we were in the early days of the Reagan Administration, and the *Times* was trimming its sails just as it had been since the fall of Nixon, when its proprietor, Punch Sulzberger, like other big newspaper moguls such as the late Katharine Graham, had decided that excessively frank reporting of political realities was not the business of the Fourth Estate.

I write this column on May 21, a day, like so many other days, when I turn to the front page of the *Times* and find yet one more article by Judith Miller on the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The words "official" and "officials" are used nineteen times, only once with an actual name attached. There are military officials, intelligence officials, White House officials, but never a human actually identified by Miller.

On the one hand we have Blair, a humble toiler in the *Times* vineyard, now branded as the great traducer; on the other, Miller, who, as I pointed out here out a month ago, has been a major, interested player in one of the greatest disgraces in the history of American journalism—to wit, its complicity in the fomenting of pretexts to invade Iraq. Blair's problem was that he didn't quite figure out the rules of the faking game. ■

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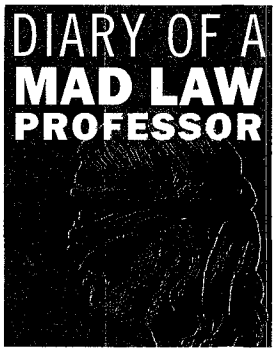
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Forgetting to Laugh



Of all the columns I've written, never have I gotten more mail than for the following sentence: "It will not matter that the Dixie Chicks play to full, cheering houses, while their current album soars to number one on the country and bluegrass charts—*The Daily Show*'s Mo Rocca on CNN, sounding a bit like the Iraqi information minister, will continue to call them the 'Dixie whores' whose 'hate speech' should consign them to 'refuge' in Canada."

Readers were exercised that I did not adequately acknowledge Rocca as a satirist. I do know he is a comedian. Indeed, a trusty *Nation* fact-checker, Elinore Longobardi, underscored this before it went to press, worried that my wording might leave a misimpression; I thought not. I was mistaken. So here's more context: Rocca made his comments not on *The Daily Show*, but in a CNN news interview. When asked if viewers ever complained about his satire, he said: "They scold us if we're not funny. And then we deserve it...a real good ass-whooping, the kind that Natalie deserves from the President, because...literally and figuratively...the Dixie Chicks cell is one of those obstacles that need be overcome. I think they're Dixie whores."

Funny or not, I am intrigued by the vehemence of the response. People wrote that my failure to appreciate Rocca's humor was "tragic" and "stupid" and "sobering." It was a "betrayal," an "ignorance," an actual "breach of faith" that made the entire editorial staff look like "fools." "Shame" on behalf of all lighthearted liberals was invoked, as in having to hang one's head while the right wing laughs at such lockjawed Stalinist stoniness. Whew! Is all this just Mo Ronic irony—or did someone mix me up with Jayson Blair? Here's how I see it: In times when you hear students routinely denouncing their professors as "whores to political correctness," there's an awfully thin membrane between Mo Rocca as political spoof and the Iraqi information minister talking doll as realpolitik. But I *am* rattled by the degree to which many of the letters echoed the intense vocabulary of condemnation flying around the Blair case. My humorless inflection was taken as lack of "intelligence" and as evidence of a systemic failure of oversight that impugned the "integrity" of the magazine. No one accused me of outright fraud, but I did have to take a few deep breaths and wonder about the possibility of spillover in the collective unconscious.

My woes aside, I find it dispiriting that for his part, Blair has become not a symbol of Ali G–like deception or Stephen Glass–like fraud, but of affirmative action *as* fraud. According to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 47 percent of top editors of dailies see factual errors in in their papers more than once a week, but Blair has become less an icon of that systemic sloppiness than of "race-based favoritism." Liberal as well as conservative pundits have had a grand old time making Blair the figurehead of the broad program that opened doors for almost every one of us in the fledgling black middle class to study, live and work in integrated environments.

This smoke of racial resentment must be disaggregated both from the real contributions of real affirmative programs and from the real toxin of the real Jayson Blair. Blair, who is also suspected of having hacked into computers to see people's personnel files, evaluations and private notes between editors, is a con man who used his considerable literary talent—and imagination—to discredit one of the world's great papers and the last genuinely liberal voice in America. Blair, whose mother is a schoolteacher and whose father is a fraud investigator at the Smithsonian, of all things, is not the illiterate drunk many seem happy to assume. If the pundits were to accord Blair some agency—if they were not so consumed by whether liberal white "superiors" are tough-enough masters of their slow-witted black underlings, in other words—perhaps a degree of political cunning might pop out as a clearer possibility. Blair's deceit was calculated, multifaceted and skillful. Let me suggest the following, not conspiratorially but rather in the spirit of individual responsibility: Surely if Blair, who attended Jerry Falwell's Liberty University before transferring to the University of Maryland, were white, wouldn't the question of ideological motive at least flicker across the table?

The *New York Times* is the very icon of liberal establishment values that the religious far right and our burgeoning neo-Confederacy have railed against with such fixation. A recent article in the *Los Angeles Times* described the kind of journalism training received at the Jesse Helms Center, in North Carolina, where college students are trained and funded to "seed" the media with conservatives in an effort to "alter the basic makeup" of the nation's campus and professional media.

"'What do you want professors to feel when you call them up?' asked Owen Rounds, a former speechwriter for Rudolph Giuliani.

"'Threatened,' replied Duncan Wilson, a tousle-haired 19-year-old from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte."

Bias, mistake, ideological blindness—there should be many more media scandals than Jayson Blair's. Yet I fear his case operates as an obfuscating flashpoint for those who will leap gleefully at the opportunity to beat the life out of "political correctness"—and with it any last political energy for the project of integration. Law professor John Calmore has analyzed the seemingly uncritical public acceptance of such reactionary accounts. In volume 83 of the *Minnesota Law Review*, he posits that a majority of Americans believe: "1. Discrimination is a thing of the past, because blacks now have the freedom to compete in the marketplace.... 2. Blacks are pushing too hard, too fast, and into places where they are not wanted. 3. These tactics and demands are unfair. 4. Therefore, recent gains are undeserved, and the institutions are giving blacks more attention and status than they deserve."

For years, the words have floated through the culture like buzzards searching for the perfect roost: "substandard," "preferential treatment," "in over their heads," "obsession with diversity." Who could have fictionalized a more pernicious cipher for this dystopic cawing than the savage irony of a Jayson Blair? ■

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ARTICLES

TAKING IT TO THE STATES

Fighting the Right at Home

by JOHN NICHOLS

Three years into a pitched battle with George W. Bush and his conservative compadres, millions of American progressives have focused their fury on Washington-based battles to beat Bush and the right-wingers who rode in with him. But with Democrats in Congress frequently failing to forge a coherent, let alone effective, opposition, it is time to recognize that some of the most important fights—for affordable healthcare, education, environmental protection and clean politics—are taking place beyond the Beltway. Often there is far more space for debate on these issues, and more opportunities for victory, in statehouses, where even some conservative Republican governors have been forced to accept tax hikes, muscled-up regulations and reform of the criminal justice system. Thus, while it is essential to battle Bush and his minions in Washington, it is equally essential to understand that the road to renewal may well run through the states. "We can't wait for Washington. Washington isn't going to save us on the issues we care about—at least, not anytime soon," says Maine State Representative Ted Koffman, a Democrat who has written some of the country's most innovative environmental protection laws. "This is where the action is, and this is where we are going to come up with the ideas that, eventually, will make their way onto the national agenda."

Koffman's right. And, while there are only seven states where Democratic governors and legislators control both branches of government, there are now Democratic governors in twenty-four states, and Democrats control at least one legislative chamber in twenty-eight states. The Supreme Court's May decision to let Maine implement a program to lower prescription drug costs serves as a reminder that progressive Democratic legislators can beat even the powerful pharmaceutical lobby. Moreover, statehouse Republicans often operate differently than the party's national leaders. It was GOP Governor George Ryan who imposed a moratorium on executions in Illinois and then commuted the sentences of death-row inmates. And Republican governors in states as divergent as Connecticut, Arkansas and Idaho have responded to a slowing economy and budget crunch by raising taxes. "At the state level, I think there are more Republicans who recognize that you have to move beyond the rhetoric to the reality that decisions we make will have an immediate impact on people's lives," says State Representative Jim Marzilli Jr., a Massachusetts Democrat who has built a coalition to restore his state's capital gains tax.

Legislators like Koffman and Marzilli, who argue for more attention to state-based activism, are actually borrowing a page from the right. "One of the reasons the right is so successful today at the federal level is the work they have done in the states," says former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, who last year ran for governor of Massachusetts. "Don't forget that the radical right spent twenty years building up its grassroots. They worked at the national level, of course, but they never ignored the states." [See "ALEC Meets His Match," page 14.] A decade ago, conservatives celebrated Republican governors such as Michigan's John Engler and Wisconsin's Tommy Thompson as innovative reformers on issues like welfare, privatization of public services and deregulation of utilities. Their corporate allies poured money into state-based conservative think tanks, backed statewide initiatives and funded campaigns to recruit and elect conservative legislators who would eventually become the foot soldiers in House Speaker Newt Gingrich's Republican revolution.

The Republican push for devolution of power to the states was often troubling to progressives, especially when it came wrapped in the "states' rights" rhetoric that they knew to be code for race-based politics. But with the tables turned in Washington, some of the best opportunities to assert progressive values are now found in state capitols. "I'm not trying to tell you that it is easy to win

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in the states. It isn't. You face a lot of the same problems that you see in Washington—special-interest money and lobbying, for instance," says Marzilli. "But it is still easier to work in the states. The scale is different. The fights are winnable, and while it takes time, while you have to go state by state, eventually you can develop the alternative to what is coming from Washington." Marzilli has worked closely with groups like United for a Fair Economy and Neighbor to Neighbor to advance a state-based Working Families Agenda. Even against Republican governors, Massachusetts labor and community groups have won two minimum-wage increases in a decade, strengthened enforcement of prevailing wage laws and required accountability in privatization proposals.

Socking It to the States

Sentient observers know that American state and local governments face a historic crisis—that they are cutting vital services and raising taxes, mainly on those already most stressed in difficult times. Schools in Oregon are closing early; New York City plans to close firehouses and reduce garbage pickups. States have already closed gaps of $50 billion in their 2003 budgets. Now they face the necessity of imposing measures almost twice as drastic for 2004.

In this crisis, fiscal assistance from the federal government to the states and cities—in two words, revenue sharing—remains our most urgent economic policy need today. To see this, just compare it with all the alternatives.

Monetary policy has run out of steam. Continued low interest rates help to ward off the evil day when consumer bankruptcies and mortgage foreclosures begin to explode, but they cannot produce a recovery on their own. That will happen only after household balance sheets improve—a process of paying down consumer and excessive mortgage debts that has barely started. And so Alan Greenspan has faded into the wallpaper; he emerges nowadays only to make timidly optimistic forecasts. There is nothing much more he can do.

Tax law under George W. Bush is a disgrace. How else to describe a proposal whose centerpiece is the elimination of income taxes on corporate dividends? How else to describe Bush's fixation on permanent repeal of the estate tax? These measures and the others like them are not a growth policy. They will have little effect on spending, for two well-known reasons: They are targeted to the wealthy, and they are back-loaded so as to conceal their true long-term impact on budget deficits.

A better policy would be to cut working people's taxes temporarily. A partial holiday in the Social Security payroll tax has been proposed, and it's not a bad idea. But are tax cuts what working Americans really want? Would they rather have them than art and music and physical education and foreign languages in their schools? Would they rather have them than open libraries and decent garbage collection? There is just no evidence that they would.

What about tax cuts for business? A business investment tax break, such as temporary accelerated depreciation, would not do much good, but it probably wouldn't do great harm. However, with so much excess capacity, don't count on a big boost from this area, whatever happens.

New federal spending, on the other hand, would effectively promote early recovery. And we will see this at work later this year, when by a miracle of astute timing the Pentagon sets about replenishing its Tomahawks and tank treads. This will boost economic growth, but it will not create many new jobs and will do almost nothing for the well-being of most Americans.

Representative Richard Gephardt has proposed repealing the 2001 Bush tax cuts and using the revenue for a wide expansion of health insurance. It's a good idea. Just as the tax cuts didn't help the economy much, repealing them would not hurt much. And using the money to meet a clear social need would be a good thing. But would it create many jobs? That is neither the point of Gephardt's proposal nor would it be the effect.

And as for the budget, mercifully Democrats are beginning to forget the demented moment in the late 1990s when some thought that endless surpluses were by themselves the ticket to full employment. The architects of that idea are hiding safely at Harvard and Citigroup. But the idea that anyone should care about current budget deficits must still be resisted. To recover economic growth in the next few years, we will need all the deficit spending we can get. The more now, the less later, when recovery finally starts up.

States and localities are cutting their budgets right now. The cumulative effect, next fiscal year, will be nearly 1 percent of total GDP. Those are direct cuts in spending or direct tax increases on those who spend almost everything they earn. That is quite enough to bring on another bad year for the economy as a whole—while business investment sputters and consumers continue to slow down. In the following year things could be even worse.

Put another way, the deficits of state and local governments can't be kept on the books, so they have to be transferred. To whom? The worst, and most likely choice, is to cut teachers and sanitation workers and parks and libraries and courts and prisons. The second worst is to raise taxes, mainly on the poor through sales taxes and on middle-class homeowners. There is no third worst choice for states and localities alone.

Why not stop this downward spiral here and now?

Unlike the states, the federal government can borrow as much as it needs. There are times when it should do so. Now is such a time. To borrow about $100 billion a year at low interest rates in order to stop state and local budget cuts over the next three years would not harm the United States. On the contrary, it would get us through the hard times, saving public services Americans need and care about, and it would get us into position for a real economic recovery later on. It's the smart thing to do. It's the right thing to do. And it would be a popular thing to do.

JAMES K. GALBRAITH

James K. Galbraith, professor at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas and senior scholar at the Levy Economics Institute, has been calling for revenue sharing for more than two years.

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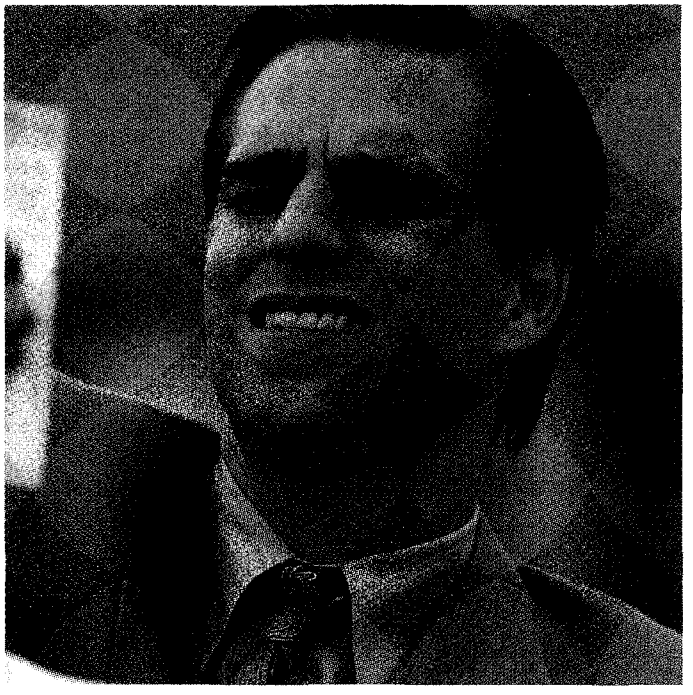
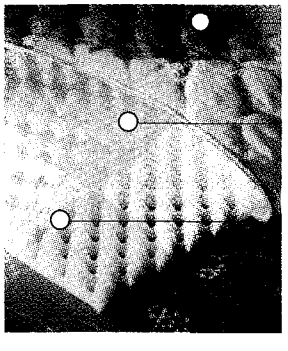
Oh no...another invite from my brother!

When choosing events I dislike the most, visiting my brother rates at the top. My feelings have nothing to do with family relationships, but rather with the sleeping arrangements. After a pleasant day of recapturing the past, it's time for me to cringe and "force march" off to bed. Why cringe? Inevitably, I am assigned what others fear—the "dread-of-bed" sleep sofa. I feel as though I am volunteering my body to some strange, torturous experiment. My brother is completely unaware of the discomfort and sleepless nights I suffer at the expense of his kind accommodations.

Because of the structure needed to support and allow the operation of many sofa beds, they require enough metal parts to build a ten story building and often incorporate technology without comfort in mind. Neither does the necessary thinness of the mattress help the comfort level. The moment my body cautiously comes in contact with the mattress of this sofa bed, I feel the discomfort of the metal support bars. I've heard others compare the sleep surface of most sofa beds to that of laying on wooden logs or train tracks. After a painful and sleepless night of trying various positions, there is no solution—until now!

Extra padding means...extra comfort. I recently discovered the Comfort Cloud® Pillow-Top mattress pad which is patented and designed with extra foam padding incorporated in the surface to prevent the discomfort that is often associated with the steel structural frame of most sofa beds. The Pillow Puff™ surface of the mattress pad cover is quilted to provide an extra thick layer of cushioning for sleep comfort. It is held in place by wide corner anchor bands under the fitted sheet. The Ulti-Mat® foam core is uniquely sculptured with high resilient foam to provide ultimate support and comfort for a better night's sleep. The high resilient flame retardant foam provides even support and better distribution of body weight reducing pressure points while improving sleeping posture and comfort. The Air Ports™ improve sleeping comfort as air circulates freely throughout the foam core making the sleeping surface cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. The Sofa Bed Pillow-Top mattress cover is also easy to clean. Just wash in luke warm water, mild soap, and tumble dry gentle cycle.





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And those are not isolated wins. The Center for Policy Alternatives, which helps legislators develop model legislation, notes that states across the country have in the past year extended unemployment insurance and family-leave laws, required insurance companies to provide contraceptive coverage and beaten tobacco companies' efforts to block new taxes on cigarettes. There are times, Reich notes, when states go beyond providing alternatives to define the debate. "If you are in a large state, on the regulatory front, you have enormous leverage," he says, noting California's moves to limit greenhouse gas emissions. "California can pass rules that corporations will decide they have to follow."

But state-based activism cannot succeed on the scale that is necessary without increased funding. "Too often, we don't have the resources we need to fight the right here, and as long as that is the case the South will get more and more conservative," says Winnett Hagens, associate director of Democracy South. "That shifts the national debate, because so many Republican leaders come from the South." But it's not just about money; it's also about building alliances across state lines and with allies in Washington. "I know as someone who came to Congress from a state legislature that a single line in a piece of federal legislation can have a dramatic effect on what people in the state capitol do," says Wisconsin Representative Tammy Baldwin, who has worked with Wisconsin activists to promote state-based universal healthcare legislation. For Congressional Democrats, says Baldwin, aiding state initiatives needs to be a priority.

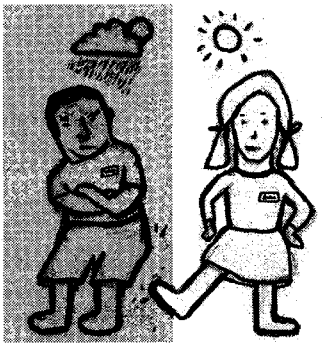
Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis argued in the early 1930s that "it is one of the happy accidents of the federal system that a single courageous state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory, and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country." Progressives must fight in Washington, but they must also take advantage of the "happy accident" that allows courageous states to become the laboratories out of which the antidotes to the Bush era will come. ■

STATE ACTIVISTS ARE LEARNING HOW TO FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE RIGHT'S POWERHOUSE.

ALEC Meets His Match

JOHN NICHOLS

George W. Bush was the President of the United States. Fran Pavley was a freshman member of the California State Assembly. On the surface, it did not look like a fair fight. But when Bush decided in March 2001 that the United States would reject the Kyoto Protocol's requirement for cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases by industrialized nations, the Democratic legislator recalls thinking, "If Washington isn't going to take a stand against global warming, then California is going to have to." So the great-granddaughter of populist orator and presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan penned a piece of legislation ordering the state's Air Resources Board to adopt regulations to achieve "the maximum feasible reduction" in emissions of greenhouse gases emitted from cars and sport utility vehicles. Overcoming a $5 million campaign by the auto industry and its allies—and the taunts of Republican legislators who described her as an "environmental extremist"—Pavley shepherded the bill through the legislature, onto Governor Gray Davis's desk and into law. That was no small accomplishment, but it was only the beginning of Pavley's challenge to Bush's anti-environment agenda.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Pavley's California bill was embraced by the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators, a low-budget, high-energy coalition of more than 200 lawmakers in forty-nine states, as a model—and an inspiration—for a state-based challenge to the President and the polluters whose side he has taken in the fight over global warming. "I took the information that she came up with in relation to California and reworked it so it would fit in the Maryland context. Then I introduced a bill that would have us set similar emissions standards and compliance requirements here," says Maryland Delegate James Hubbard, a Democrat who heads NCEL. Democratic and GOP legislators who are NCEL participants have introduced related legislation in New Jersey, Connecticut and Hawaii, and Hubbard says he is fielding calls from legislators across the country who want their states to follow California's lead. "It's a grassroots kick in the butt to Congress and the Bush Administration," says Hubbard. "Legislators are saying: Look, if you can't get on top of these global-warming issues, we will. And we're forcing the corporations to recognize that just because they've got the federal government, that doesn't mean they're off the hook. That's what NCEL is all about—influencing the legislative process at the state level in a way that has national implications."

Established as a response to 1994 election results that put Republican conservatives in charge not just of Congress but of legislatures that had not been in GOP hands for decades, and to the coordinated assaults on environmental protection in Washington and state capitals across the country that followed those political shifts, NCEL is one of a growing number of organizations that help progressive legislators—and activists who work on state issues—to link up across state lines. While legislators have long shared ideas through nonpartisan groups like the Council of State Governments and the National Conference of State Legislatures, the forging of progressive issue-based and ideologically driven groups of legislators is a newer phenomenon. "It always made sense for us to work together, but that didn't necessarily happen," says Wisconsin State Representative Mark Pocan, a Democrat who co-chairs the Midwest Progressive Elected Officials Network, members of which have been in the forefront of

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promoting legislation to require more accountability from corporations. "What really caused a lot of us to recognize the need for this kind of organizing was the recognition that we were going to have to build some networks of our own to block ALEC."

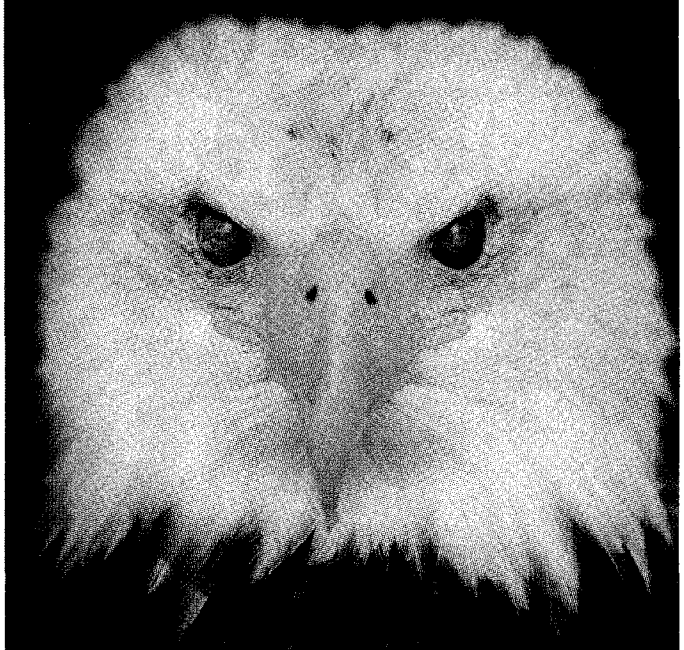
ALEC is the American Legislative Exchange Council, a thirty-year-old conservative powerhouse that bills itself as the "largest bipartisan, individual membership association of state legislators." Formed by conservative activist Paul Weyrich with early backing from John Birch Society member Joseph Coors, ALEC was once a relatively sincere if extreme right-wing group that opposed abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment and the codification of advances made by the civil rights movement. In the 1980s and '90s, however, ALEC was remolded by corporate lobbyists to implement their agenda. Flush with $6 million a year in funding from Amoco, Chevron, Texaco, Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Cargill, AT&T, Wackenhut Corrections, the American Nuclear Energy Council, the Chlorine Chemistry Council, the American Petroleum Institute, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America and, until recently, Enron, ALEC has drawn a membership of 2,400 legislators—one-third of the nation's total—with "junkets and other largesse," according to "Corporate America's Trojan Horse in the States: The Untold Story Behind the American Legislative Exchange Council," a study released last year by the Defenders of Wildlife and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

ALEC sets up task forces of legislators and corporate lobbyists who draw up "model legislation," dealing with everything from expanding spending on prisons, to removing barriers to the genetic modification of food, to supporting the Bush Administration's push to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas. The bills are then introduced by the legislators and promoted by the lobbyists. ALEC played a critical role in pushing Enron's fifty-state utility deregulation agenda. It is so slavish to corporate antitax dogmas that this spring, it was busy promoting opposition to Congressional moves to increase aid to financially strapped states.

"What ALEC does is devastating for states and for the people who live in them, but now we even see a lot of Democrats signing up with ALEC because, of course, that's where the money is," says Leon Billings, a former Maryland legislator who helped found the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators to counter ALEC-promoted legislation that let corporations skirt environmental regulations by conducting "self audits" on their facilities. "But the interesting thing is that, at least at the state level, there are still a lot of Democrats and a good number of Republicans who refuse to bend to the corporate pressure. That's the base we started to work from, and we've actually been able to beat ALEC—on its own legislation and on our bills."

ALEC has also faced spirited challenges from well-established groups like US PIRG (the national association of state public-interest research groups), USAction and the Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA), all of which have track records of linking activists and legislators in campaigns for model legislation. For instance, USAction and CPA have been in the thick of efforts to promote state-level prescription-drug reform laws. "It was through CPA that we spread the word among legislators about how they could take on drug companies," says former Maine Senate majority leader Chellie Pingree, now president of Common Cause.

America's Role In The World



Protector or Predator?

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and
Bill Emmott, Editor of *The Economist*
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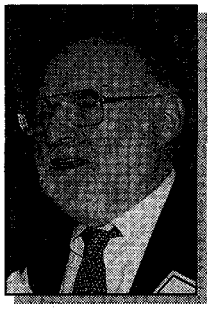
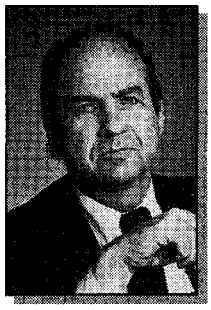


Victor Navasky
Publisher and Editorial Director, *The Nation*

Katrina vanden Heuvel
Editor, *The Nation*



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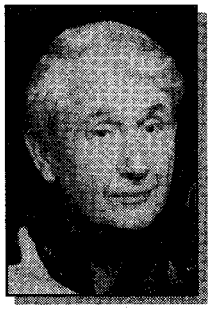

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Patricia J. Williams
"Diary of a Mad Law Professor" Columnist

Amos Elon
Veteran Israeli Journalist, Historian and Author of *The Pity of It All*

Molly Ivins
Political Satirist and *Nation* Contributing Editor

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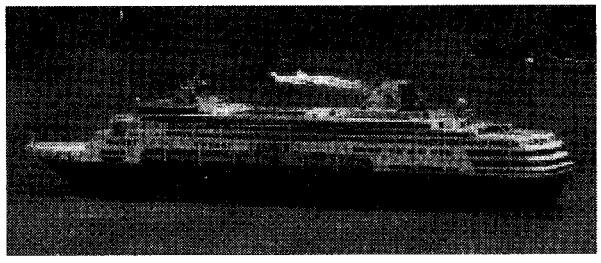
Dec. 6	Sat	Tampa, Florida		5:00PM
Dec. 7	Sun	Key West, Florida	11:30AM	6:00PM
Dec. 8	Mon	Day at Sea		
Dec. 9	Tue	Belize Ciy, Belize	8:00 AM	6:00 PM
Dec. 10	Wed	Santo Tomas de Castilla, Guatemala	6:00 AM	6:00 PM
Dec. 11	Thu	Cozumel, Mexico	1:00 PM	11:30 PM
Dec. 12	Fri	Day at Sea		
Dec. 13	Sat	Tampa, Florida	8:00 AM	



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For all the good efforts of CPA and other groups, however, there is general agreement that progressives still need more organizational muscle—and better coalitions—if they want to counter ALEC's multistate, multi-issue thrust. "I wish I could take a pencil and erase the barriers that prevent progressives from working across state lines the way that conservatives do," says Nina Moseley, executive director of Democracy South, which is working to "export" the model that was used to win public financing of judicial elections in North Carolina to neighboring states. "But it's just not that easy. We're going to need to get our allies focused on what can be done at the state level, and we're going to need the money to build the infrastructure that rivals what the right has constructed. That means that the foundations have to get a lot more involved with these state and regional initiatives." She adds, "We've got to become as good as the conservatives are at sharing resources, sharing ideas and sharing energy."

The secret to doing that, argues Andy Gussert, who helped put together the "Trojan Horse in the States" study, involves building on the strengths of longstanding groups such as CPA and encouraging the development of newer groups, such as NCEL and the Midwest Progressive Elected Officials Network, which he describes as "edgier, more aggressive organizations that are ready to go toe to toe with ALEC." By focusing on specific issue areas such as environmental protection or by working on a regional basis, Gussert says, these groups are able to build tight-knit networks of legislators who use close ties to grassroots groups—and whatever foundation funding they can scrape together—not just to battle ALEC but to pass progressive legislation. Working with labor, environmental and community groups such as ACORN, Gussert in recent months has been coordinating the formation of a clearinghouse for such groups, the American Legislative Issue Campaign Exchange (ALICE), which is intended to counter ALEC's initiatives by spreading the word about right-wing stealth agendas, distributing model legislation, analyzing state budget issues and linking legislators to experts on how to craft and pass "high-road" economic development initiatives that benefit workers and the environment. ALICE's official coming-out party will take place late this spring, but the group already has a website, www.highroadnow.org. "Think of ALICE as ALEC's younger, smarter, more progressive and more feisty sister," says Gussert. "We want ALICE to make ALEC's life miserable." ■

Tales of the Texas Border

They're back now, but Texas's few living elected Democrats, who fled to Oklahoma pursued by minions of the law, are said to remain unrepentant. The proximate cause was a redistricting map, but the real reason was a sessionlong display of meanness and unfairness that finally became unbearable. Faced with a $10 billion deficit, the Republicans decided to outlaw gay marriage. Then they kicked 250,000 poor children off a health insurance program that is mostly paid for by the Feds. And when the handicapped came to the capital to protest cuts in their services, the governor had them arrested.

These are Shiite Republicans—they don't compromise, they don't deal, they don't look for the middle way. Because they believe they're right. They think it's them against evil. And everybody who ain't them is evil. I'm just warning you: This is about to happen everywhere. The whole country is being turned into the state whose proudest boast is that sometimes we're ahead of Mississippi.

After the Democrats' Big Bolt, the Republicans were left without a quorum. Bills died by the dozen as the lawmakers wanted by the law bollixed up the legislative works (bills not through second reading as of May 15 die automatically, a bit of legislative process the fleeing Dems cunningly used to their advantage). Governor Goodhair Perry, who keeps saying he wants more civility and bipartisanship, denounced the AWOL solons as "cowardly" and "childish." He asked neighboring governors to arrest the perps on sight, leading New Mexico Attorney General Patricia Madrid to put out an all-points bulletin on any politicians "in favor of health care for the needy and against tax cuts for the wealthy." Speaker Tom Craddick, the tyrant whose insupportable conduct forced these brave Democratic heroes to leave their native heath, said he refused to negotiate and that the Killer D's were embarrassing the State of Texas.

But the real embarrassment was US House majority leader Tom "The Hammer" DeLay, who admitted that the Republicans had sought the assistance of the *federales* in going after the recalcitrant D's. That, apparently, is how the Homeland Security Department, which is supposed to be making America safe from foreign terrorists, ended up tracking a plane belonging to one of the Democrats fighting against the redistricting bill to Ardmore, Oklahoma. This isn't just weird Texas politics—creepin' fascism, that's what we're looking at.

The redistricting map that touched off this mess is a masterpiece, a veritable Dadaist work reminiscent of Salvador Dali's more lunatic productions. But the Democrats' action has nothing to do with "payback." The Texas Congressional redistricting plan currently in effect was drawn by the courts and was a great disappointment to the Democrats.

Nor is Speaker Craddick's sessionlong performance combining the best elements of *Dracula* and *The Eggplant That Ate Chicago* payback for some heavy-handed Democratic domination. For the past ten years, the Speaker of the House has been a decent and exceptionally fair man named Pete Laney. If you don't believe me, go ask George W. Bush. (Of course, Laney does sound exactly like Boomhauer on *King of the Hill*, but that's a different problem.)

The Democrats came home heroes to their people. A Democrat from Boise, Idaho, said he planned to confront the state's legislative D's with headlines and pictures of the Texas Killer D's and to label the montage "Democrats With Cojones." Unfortunately, it was pointed out, there aren't enough Idaho Democrats to break a quorum.

MOLLY IVINS

Molly Ivins, a syndicated newspaper columnist, is co-author of Shrub: The Short But Happy Political Life of George W. Bush *(Random House).*

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Local Heroes

Disappointed with Congress? Join the club. Since the GOP consolidated its grip on the House and Senate, the legislative branch has provided little check on President George W. Bush's executive imbalance. But in statehouses across America, progressives are winning fights for social and economic policies—and even achieving some foreign-policy goals—that represent an alternative to the right-wing agenda. Here are eight state legislators who provide examples of leadership that Democrats in Congress ought to emulate.

RICHARD ALARCÓN—California

When Richard Alarcón and John Burton paid a visit to the Golden State Museum in Sacramento last year, they lingered over an exhibit recalling novelist Upton Sinclair's 1934 campaign for governor of

the state on a promise to "End Poverty in California." Alarcón recalls turning to his friend and saying, "That's what I want to do." "Let's do it," responded Burton. Idle talk? No. Burton, president of the California State Senate, and Alarcón, the chair of the chamber's Labor and Industrial Relations Committee, created the Senate Select Committee on the Status of Ending Poverty in California. "Our objective is to draft a master plan—a substantive package of legislation, which will be held up as a commitment from our state to end poverty," says Alarcón, who has taken his committee into the day-labor camps, the sweatshops, the homeless centers and the immigrant neighborhoods of a state where 4 million people live in poverty. The goal is to develop programs that will over the coming decade reverse the trend toward increasing poverty. At the same time, Alarcón is going after a root cause of poverty with his "good corporate citizen" bill—one of several such measures being pushed around the country—which would bar corporate directors from performing their duties "at the expense of the environment, human rights, the public health and safety, the communities in which the corporation operates, or the dignity of the corporation's employees."

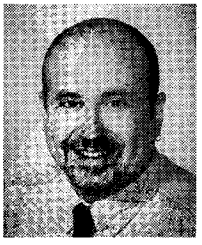
SENFRONIA THOMPSON—Texas

Then-Governor George W. Bush failed to attend the funeral of James Byrd Jr., the African-American man who was dragged to his death by white supremacists in Jasper, Texas, in 1998. But Bush could not

avoid contact with Byrd's family, or the issues his murder raised, because State Representative Senfronia Thompson would not allow him to. Thompson, a Houston Democrat, took the slain man's daughter, Renee Byrd-Mullins, to Bush's office to help lobby for the anti–hate crimes bill Thompson had drafted. It was an unsatisfying meeting, and Thompson told reporters that when Mullins started to cry, "the Governor did not offer a glass of water. Or a Kleenex." Thompson's tough, and effective. Named one of her state's best legislators by *Texas Monthly*, she regularly proves that even in the cradle of conservatism, it is possible to fight for social justice and win. She got the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Bill, including the protections for gays and lesbians that she insisted upon, passed and signed into law by Bush's successor, conservative Republican Rick Perry. And she got Perry to sign a contraceptive equity bill after a fight that Sarah Wheat of the Texas Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League calls a classic example of how Thompson operates. "She uses all these tools: charm, humor, persuasion, passion, and if all else fails she will shame them," says Wheat. "If it's a tough fight, we always say: Put Representative Thompson on it, because if she believes in a bill she won't stop until it's law."

MARK POCAN—Wisconsin

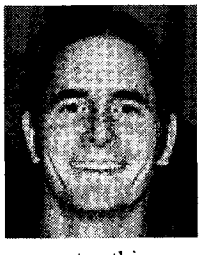
State Representative Mark Pocan has never been part of the majority in the Wisconsin State Assembly, yet he hasn't let that detail prevent him from shaping the debate. Elected from liberal Madison in 1998,



Pocan knows how to work as an insider—he used a position on the Assembly's criminal justice committee to publicize abuses at the state's supermax prison so effectively that Republicans joined him in pressing for reforms. But Pocan, a gay, union-card-carrying Grateful Deadhead, is at his best when he indulges his Merry Prankster side: He gives out "Golden Turkey" awards to conservatives who waste tax dollars on pet projects, and when the Republican Speaker refused to give Democratic bills a hearing, Pocan launched a website that featured animated images of the Speaker riding a scooter over the rights of legislators and citizens. When a conservative Democrat who was pegged by party leaders to be the nominee for lieutenant governor sided with the Republicans on a key budget vote, Pocan got several dozen liberal legislators to sign a petition asking activist Barbara Lawton to enter the primary contest. She did, and won. "Mark is so good at getting attention for issues and so good at motivating activists that I often think about what he could do if Democrats won the majority in the legislature," says Lawton. "What he's doing now is proving that being in the minority doesn't necessarily mean you can't be effective."

DAVID ZUCKERMAN—Vermont

"As you can imagine, passing genuinely progressive legislation even in a state like Vermont is not easy," says State Representative David Zuckerman of Burlington. It is even harder when you are not a part



of either major-party caucus. But Zuckerman, the senior legislator in the four-member Vermont Progressive Party caucus, is proving he can have an impact: After years of crusading for an increase in the state minimum wage, Zuckerman and other Progressive legislators—as well as their small-p progressive allies in the Democratic Party—found an unexpected supporter this year in newly elected Republican Governor James Douglas. It looks like Vermont's minimum-wage workers will get a 50-cent-an-hour raise. That's progress, says Zuckerman, but not enough—he wants to tie increases to an inflation index and, ultimately, to get the legislature talking about a living wage rather than a minimum wage. Some of Zuckerman's most important work involves simply putting issues on the agenda. Two bills he has been pushing for years now have scores of co-sponsors from across the political spectrum: One requires labeling of genetically engineered

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By John Nichols

food products; the other allows medical use of marijuana. Zuckerman and his fellow Progressives are also pushing for electoral reforms such as instant-runoff voting, real campaign-finance reform and a nonpartisan approach to redistricting.

NAN ORROCK—Georgia

Nan Orrock has been on a long march that she says began when she "stepped into the streets on August 28, 1963, to join the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." The Virginia native organized

campuses for the Southern Student Organizing Committee, helped organize textile workers in North Carolina, co-founded Atlanta's *Great Speckled Bird* underground newspaper and served as executive director of the Fund for Southern Communities. In 1987 she marched into the Georgia Statehouse, where she took a seat among legislators who in some cases had served since segregation days. The Atlanta Democrat worked her way into spots on some of the House's most powerful committees and, ultimately, to her current position as the House majority whip. Ever the organizer, Orrock has over the years pulled together coalitions to pass the Georgia Family Medical Leave Act and the Georgia Hate Crimes Act, among others. Last year she led the fight to make the state's unemployment insurance system fairer. Even as she builds coalitions, however, Orrock refuses to trim her progressive sails; while some Democratic legislators defended inclusion of the Confederate flag on the state banner, Orrock declared, "It's common knowledge the Confederate Stars and Bars have become a symbol of racism." When she isn't stirring things up in Georgia, Orrock is organizing legislators nationally, serving as a board member of the Center for Policy Alternatives and as president of the Women Legislators' Lobby, a network of women legislators that campaigns to cut excessive military spending.

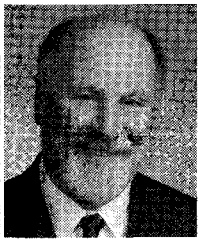
APRIL FAIRFIELD—North Dakota

At the behest of US-based agribusiness corporations, the Bush Administration is demanding that the World Trade Organization force the European Union to lift restrictions on genetically modified foods.

But resistance to the re-engineering of food supplies isn't just coming from Brussels, it's also coming from Bismarck. Since her 1996 election to the North Dakota Statehouse, Democrat April Fairfield has been at the center of the fight to make sure that farmers and consumers—not multinationals and the WTO—decide what is planted, sold and eaten. After Fairfield won House approval of a bill placing a two-year moratorium on the sale of GM wheat seeds, the chair of the state Senate Agriculture Committee prevented it from becoming law. Fairfield challenged him in the 2002 election and won. In a Republican-controlled legislature, Fairfield is continuing to wage an uphill battle for the moratorium, and she is expanding her activism beyond the Capitol. The woman who marched with farmers from around the world during the 1999 anti-WTO protest in Seattle has joined the Dakota Resource Council and farm activists in filing a legal petition calling on the US Secretary of Agriculture to deny biotech behemoth Monsanto's request for permission to start selling GM wheat seeds until the USDA has fully analyzed the environmental, social and economic impacts of such a decision. "April's so in touch with farmers on these issues and she's so determined," says the North Dakota Progressive Coalition's Don Morrison. "There are a lot of powerful interests pushing on these issues—right up to the White House—but my money's on April to win."

ADAM KLINE—Washington

Legislators are called "lawmakers," but sometimes the most important work they do involves the unmaking of laws. Washington State Senator Adam Kline reminded his constituents of that fact when, as



WASHINGTON STATE SENATE

part of a list of his accomplishments during the 2001–02 legislative session, the Democrat declared, "This past session, I used my power as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee to kill a particularly evil bill: HB 2416, which would have expanded the authority of police to wiretap phones during investigations of 'terrorist acts.' Coming in the wake of September 11, this bill would have altered much too drastically the fragile balance between police power and traditional American civil liberties." Retaining all the passion that drove him as a volunteer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi and as a lawyer for the ACLU, Kline still sees himself as an activist. He has stood up to the state's Democratic governor, as he did when he built a coalition of liberals and anti–big government conservatives to block the "terrorist acts" bill; and he has crafted groundbreaking legislation, such as a bill he co-wrote to shorten prison sentences for possession of drugs and create treatment programs for addicts arrested for drug crimes. As the representative of a progressive district, Kline says, he's expected to be "out there leading the charge."

ETHAN STRIMLING—Maine

As President Bush moved the United States closer and closer to war last winter, Congress was virtually silent. So the Maine State Senate stepped in, passing a resolution urging the Administration to "sup-

SENATE STAFF

port the full pursuit of diplomatic resolutions and weapons inspections." The sponsor of the resolution was Ethan Strimling, a Portland Democrat who usually works on issues like keeping Casco Bay free of cruise-ship discharge and expanding healthcare coverage. Why did Strimling work to pull the Maine legislature—which also includes Green State Representative John Eder, another champion of antiwar legislation—into a debate about Iraq? Because, he argued, "this war's going to cost $200 billion, while the families up here are struggling to pay their bills. How is it that we find enough money to be able to bomb Iraq, but we don't have enough money to provide healthcare for Maine families and daycare for our children?" "I wish the Democratic leaders in Congress would have framed the issue as well as he did," said the Institute for Policy Studies' Karen Dolan, who coordinated the national Cities for Peace campaign.

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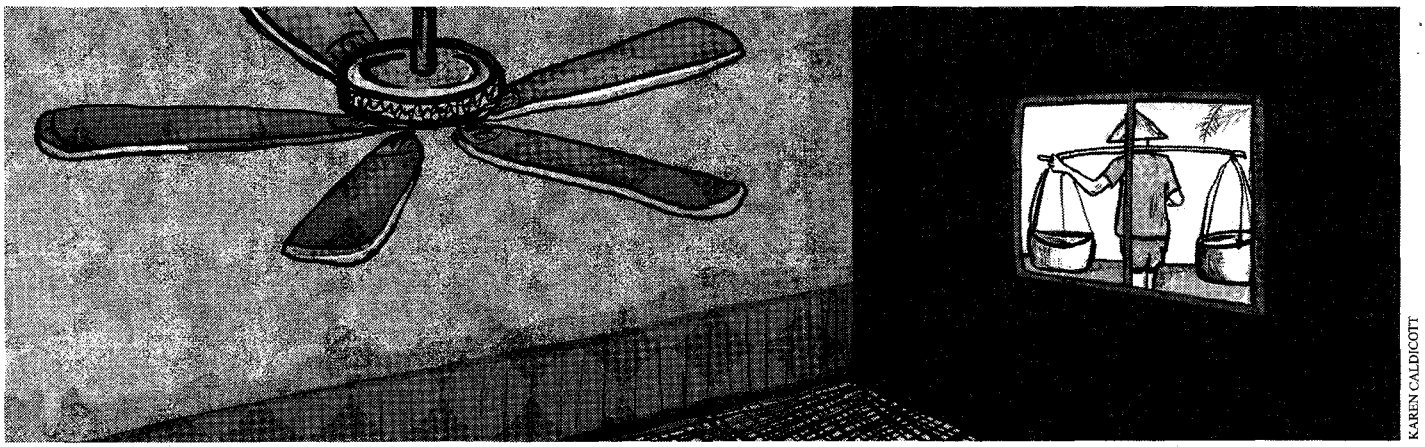
IF AMERICANS HAVE DONE THEIR BEST TO FORGET THE WAR, SO HAVE THE VIETNAMESE. YOUNG PEOPLE PREFER TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE AND WANT FRIENDLY TIES TO AMERICA.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Letter From Vietnam

PETER DAVIS

Recently, with considerable misgiving, I returned to Vietnam for the first time since 1972, when I was there to make a documentary film about the war. My memories were unpromising. I had been scared and homesick, hated being around war, and was so focused on the documentary that I edited out everything that wasn't something I wanted to film. A war film by definition is concerned with mankind's most toxic activity.

Frightened every day, I didn't notice whether the country was beautiful or the people hospitable. It never occurred to me to go back. Gloria Emerson, who won a National Book Award for her recollections of the war, told me why she couldn't return. "I'd see dead soldiers at night in my hotel," she said. "I couldn't rise above the level of memory." I was coaxed into a different frame of mind by my fiancée, Alicia Anstead, an arts writer fascinated by the connection, in peace and war, between the United States and Vietnam.

* * *

The future contends with the past: It is still the Vietnam that seduced Graham Greene, our posthumous host on this journey, a half-century ago. To go there today is to see a country build itself before your eyes. On every hand you'll find bounties of nature and humanity—art, music, mountains, waterways, food as enticing as jewels, the glorious lake-studded collection of villages known as Hanoi, the modern reconstructed sprawl of Ho Chi Minh City, the former Saigon. Most of all, you'll find the Vietnamese. They like us. Against all powers of reason and history, they really do like Americans. Why? Well, they won. They don't have to resent us as conquerors but can appreciate individual acts of kindness that go back all the way to the war itself.

In recent years our NGOs—such as the American Friends Service Committee and the US-Vietnam Trade Council, to name two very different organizations—have made an exemplary record helping heal wounds as well as bringing in commercially minded Americans who have, so far, been given more to enterprising investment that provides employment than to rapacity that depletes natural resources. From the numerous expats I met, I gather there is an element of atonement present, even if this is being undertaken by those US citizens who have considerably less to atone for than some others we could all name. They are the right ambassadors for the more positive aspects of our country. There is also the real ambassador, Raymond Burghardt, who, despite a background that includes working for Oliver North, has impressed the Vietnamese as a friendly, pragmatic, culturally interested diplomat.

Western influences blend more easily with indigenous customs and practices than in most parts of Asia. Our hotel's night manager spent four years in the former Czechoslovakia and speaks Russian. What he hopes for Vietnam, however, is that it becomes what he calls "a business nation." This sounded a theme we heard many times not only in Hanoi but throughout the country. The family of Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, who masterminded the wars against both the French and the Americans, includes an executive who controls one of Vietnam's Internet services and proudly describes himself on his business card as "Venture Capitalist." The disagreements in Vietnam are not over socialism versus capitalism or a directed versus a market economy. The disagreements are only over how fast and in what way to do the most business with the most countries and get the United States into Vietnamese economic life as fully as possible.

We made contact in Hanoi with a paradoxically socialist entrepreneur named Gerald Herman. He has been an expatriate for a generation and in Vietnam ten years, running and promoting a variety of small and medium-sized businesses. Herman's impulses—and he is a man of impulse—are economically and politically progressive. He deals frequently with the Vietnamese

Peter Davis's most recent book is If You Came This Way: A Journey Through the Lives of the Underclass *(John Wiley). He received an Academy Award for his documentary* Hearts and Minds.

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government, both marveling at and dismayed by its embrace of capitalistic behavior. "The country still calls itself socialist," he said, "but when I go to see government officials I'm talking Ho Chi Minh and they're talking Milton Friedman."

Herman introduced me to an artist named Tran Luong who is well known in Hanoi and was about to leave for New York, where he was to attend an exhibit of Vietnamese art at the Museum of Natural History. Luong is an eagle-eyed man just old enough to have been sent as a child to relatives in the countryside in order to escape American bombing. "I wasn't taught to hate Americans," he said. "I was only taught to hide. Even as kids running from bombs, sent away from our parents, my friends and I knew about the US peace movement. We knew there were Americans we could like. We felt you had bad leaders." According to Luong, the peace movement did give aid and comfort to the Vietnamese, just as its opponents charged, and did help sustain them under our bombardment. Two weeks later, after the invasion of Iraq began, I again heard from Vietnamese the excuse that Americans were good people who happened to have bad leaders. I wondered how long we can get away with that one.

'I wasn't taught to hate Americans. I was only taught to hide.... We felt you had bad leaders.'
—Tran Luong

The American expat community in Hanoi, a floating population of several hundred, includes artists, writers, businesspeople, war veterans, anthropologists, retirees and healthcare providers. A lanky, sandy-haired Georgian named Chuck Searcy runs a project to defuse landmines, bombs and mortars, mostly in the old DMZ and in Quang Tri province. "A lot still remains to be cleared out," he said. "We dropped the daisy cutters and carpet-bombed from the China Sea to the Laotian border, essentially cutting the country in two with a swath of destruction. It's still not safe to go to a lot of places along that line." In 1967–68 he served in Vietnam in military intelligence (not an oxymoron in Searcy's case), and he has most recently worked as Vietnam representative for a company called Asian Landmine Solutions. Only Vietnamese are permitted to do the actual defusing, but Searcy's group is involved in finding the ordnance and cleaning up afterward.

One of the most prominent Americans in Vietnam is Lady Borton, the country representative for the American Friends Service Committee as well as an author. Originally from Ohio, she has lived in Vietnam most of the time since 1969. She rides around Hanoi on a bicycle, her graying hair flying, like the traffic itself, in all directions at once. She has investigated the long-term consequences of Agent Orange and landmines, and her current project is in rural development. "What really bled Vietnam white," she told me, "was not the war itself but the economic embargo by the United States, which kept the country under siege for twenty more years until normal diplomatic relations were established."

Lady Borton, who speaks Vietnamese, finds the atmosphere far more hospitable now than in the early years of independence. After the American war ended in 1975, the Vietnamese fought the Cambodian Khmer Rouge to the west and were attacked in the north by the Chinese. "Before about 1988," Borton said, "I couldn't really talk freely to people here, nor they to me. After the siege mentality finally faded in the early 1990s, everything opened up. People talked and people built." Borton added that Hanoi is virtually a new city compared with even a decade ago. This is a little less true of Ho Chi Minh City, still called Saigon by most of the people I spoke to, because it wasn't bombed during the war, yet it, too, has had a building boom. "The geopolitical tragedy of Vietnam," Borton said, "is that it is caught between two huge forces, China and the United States. If forced to choose, the Vietnamese would choose America, no question about that."

Whenever I have visited a Communist country, either self-proclaimed or one we call Communist—the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Sandinista Nicaragua—I have found myself deep in yes-but territory. I'm constitutionally sympathetic with the socialist ideal; yes, but I live in the most capitalist country in the world and enjoy its advantages. In each of the above countries, a revolution triumphed; yes, but the people have not enjoyed freedom of expression or action. The state is stultifying and totalitarian, the very opposite of the socialist ideal it proclaims; yes, but literacy, medical care, general social equality and economic possibility are now extended to a much larger proportion of the population than before. In Vietnam, the yes-buts spin into cognitive dissonance. The Vietnamese won liberation but their government's early attitude toward civil liberties would have pleased only a John Ashcroft. In their fight against the United States, the Vietnamese Communists lost virtually every pitched battle. Yes, but they won the war. Yes, but they lost the revolution, or to be more precise, the revolution shriveled into dictatorship, corruption, state monopolies, and has now devolved into the very force they fought against, market capitalism itself. Yes, but the Vietnamese are increasingly prosperous and, more to my own point, increasingly free.

Gerry Herman, an expat so outspoken he can become the verbal equivalent of a Roman candle, advised me to "stay away" from freedom issues regarding Vietnam. "Their poverty and political paranoia are the direct result of our ruthless and abusive treatment," he said. "They've felt they get so much shit from the outside they don't want to get it from the inside as well." He urged me to remember Singapore, an American ally often held up as a shining example of economic progress, whose social policies are far more repressive than Vietnam's. "As the threat from abroad has receded, so has government pressure," Herman said. "Freedom is really here now in a practical sense. Ten years ago you had to get permission to comb your hair. Today books and movies are flowing in from around the world. Every month Vietnam is freer."

When I questioned the journalist Tran Viet Hung, who writes for the Vietnamese newspaper *Bao Thanh Nien*, about what he could and could not publish, he was both direct and somewhat ambivalent. "There is no censoring agency in Vietnam," he wrote in an e-mail. On the other hand, he continued, "Editors-in-chief and reporters are responsible to the law for the contents they publish. They could be blamed, disciplined or even sued if the information is proved false." In other words, a writer can write what he wants, but he doesn't have the right to be wrong, as wrong is officially defined. I asked Hung if a Vietnamese publication could call for the resignation of a government official, or could disagree with a major foreign policy initiative. In both cases the answer is no. In

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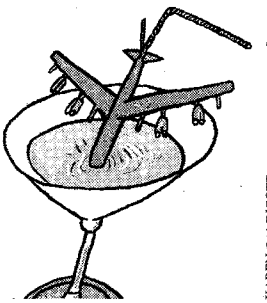
addition, Hung said, government approval is needed for plays to be performed and movies to be shown. Permission is also necessary in order to hold a public meeting. In practice, these strictures are often ignored—public meetings occur daily that have not been procedurally sanctioned—but they still remain official policy. A one-party government can always reverse a thaw.

It is certainly no problem for foreigners to go anywhere in Hanoi as long as they remember that traffic lights, as Alicia observed, are treated only as suggestions. These days Vietnamese are so busy you find people doing calisthenics around Hanoi's lakes by 4:30 AM, at work by 5, and the work—construction, repairing, making things, carrying goods on shoulder poles, shopkeeping—continues until after 10 PM. On a Sunday stroll, I saw families taking a few hours off crowded around small tables eating eight- and ten-course dinners on open porches. Dishes looked and smelled as delicious as they were, to my eyes, unidentifiable. A friendly grandmother offered me tastes from an array of small platters while I, Westernly wary of germs, gestured to indicate I was full and tried to be polite as I backed away. No one seemed to mind my wandering into their street-level homes to ask directions when I found myself utterly lost on the narrow streets of the old quarter.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Ironies abound. In a city where B-52s wreaked havoc a generation ago, several Hanoi restaurants offer the drink "B-52 Bomber," which one menu promises will "explode in your mouth" (they wish?), while a few blocks away the emasculated remains of a plane shot down during the Nixon-Kissinger Christmas bombing of 1972 protrudes from a tiny lake near a sign praising the air defense regiment for shooting down the "US Imperialist B-52." One day at the US Embassy, we sat in a waiting room with a dozen Vietnamese men, all dressed in suits and ties, who were watching an embassy TV tuned to HBO, showing a Vietnam War movie. A lot of combat, the Americans valiant, the Vietnamese shifty, diabolical. As we sat there embarrassed, the Vietnamese men looked at the screen, occasionally shrugged, exchanged a few words with each other, chuckled. Were they saying, "Yeah, fine, but we won," or were they horrified, amused, or simply didn't care? An American told us they were most likely at the embassy trying to get visas to come to the United States.

If Americans have done their best to forget the war in Vietnam, so have the Vietnamese. Many young Vietnamese told me they have very little concept of the war at all, preferring to think instead of the future they are making and of friendly relations with the United States. An undercurrent among Vietnamese journalists and intellectuals, however, is directed toward keeping memories alive. One morning Gerry Herman showed me two documentary films made recently by Vietnamese filmmakers.

The first film, dealing with Agent Orange, was titled *Where War Has Passed: The Legacy of Agent Orange*. A mother is on-screen telling of being in a field sprayed with Agent Orange and giving birth, long after the war, to five children, who are filmed with her. Not one of them can see. Three of the children are not only blind but have no eyes at all; flaps of skin are on their foreheads where eyes are supposed to be. According to the film, 2 million Vietnamese are victims of Agent Orange, half a million of them children. The second film, called *Deadly Debris*, was about landmines. The narrator says 15 million tons of explosives were either dropped on Vietnam or placed in its soil. Children are shown without limbs, lost when they stepped on landmines or previously unexploded bombs. As recently as 1997, seven children were killed when one of them touched a bomb and it exploded. The living children shown have shrapnel in their chests, heads, abdomen, eyes and lungs. All of them, the narrator says, "were born when the war had been over" for ten to fifteen years. These films are not marginal, anti-American diatribes; they were supported by Catholic Relief, Oxfam, the Quakers and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

That evening, my own film about the war, *Hearts and Minds*, was screened for several dozen people, including eight Vietnamese, in a large office. According to members of the film community in Hanoi, the documentary had never been shown in their country. It was my turn to be ambivalent. I wanted the film shown yet was afraid the Vietnamese wouldn't like it. Every time a Vietnamese was shown, I worried whether he or she would be seen only as a victim. A coffin maker, a Catholic priest and a Buddhist monk—each defiant, proclaiming Vietnamese independence—were reassuring, but then there were children and the elderly made homeless by our bombing, sometimes running from a new attack, all those refugees, all the wounded, the dead.

A Vietnamese man with stern features walked out, wordless, at the end of the screening. A 50-year-old Vietnamese woman rose from her seat, crying. "Seeing your movie," she sobbed, "I hate Americans again. I was a child running, one of those children running from your bombs. My sister and my mother and I all ran, and I got away. My sister and my mother were killed." But when the woman composed herself and went on speaking, she addressed everyone at the screening. "No, I don't hate Americans, all of you in this room are my friends, friends to the Vietnamese people." She turned to me. "Being American you have the freedom to do what you want," she said, "so do you think you could get President Bush to give two hours to watch this film and then he would think again about what he is doing and stop his war ways?"

As if.

Some days later, Tran Dac Loi, secretary general of the Vietnamese Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO), the stern-faced man who had left the screening, asked if I would come to see him. With an almost severe concentration, he spoke to me as though he were trying to reach everyone in the United States. It turned out that despite his speedy exit he hadn't been offended by my film, but he did want to talk about Vietnam today. "See us with our achievements and also our problems," he said. "We think it's possible to have socialism within a market economy, but we are not there yet. Here is our biggest problem—how to find a model for development not dictated by business, which means also how to have elections not influenced by money, to find solutions to our social problems without elevating part of the population over everyone else. We don't have enough democratization in Vietnam and we want more, yet we also can't afford to create chaos. Our political system is not satisfactory yet, but we're working on it. We're in a truly dynamic process of development."

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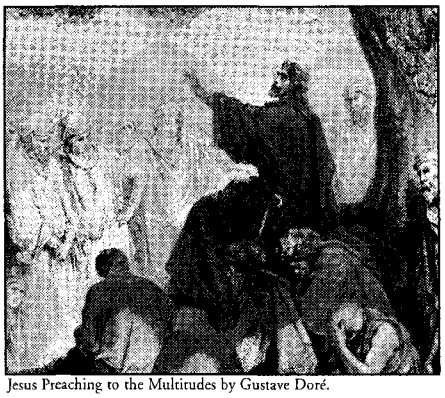

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What Loi said confirmed what I'd been able to observe and hear elsewhere. This is not a country looking for its soul—it has had that for a long time—but searching instead for a way to be its best self and for the most congenial method of living in a world dominated by the United States. "We tried the model of the Soviet Union," Loi said, "and it didn't work. Education and medical care were free, but so little was achieved. We had to start over, and everything was costly. Now we have succeeded in making primary education free, but secondary education is not yet completely free even though the fees are small, and we have to improve that. Medical care is better, but it is still not guaranteed for the poor, and we're working on that, too."

The last place I visited in Hanoi was the Temple of Literature, a famous compound dedicated to learning in the middle of the city yet protected from it, and quiet. Literally, a retreat. It was a relief to be reminded that contemplation is perhaps the most beautiful of human endeavors, the paradox being that it is also invisible, like peace.

From the Caravelle Hotel in 1972 I became accustomed to flares in the distance...the nocturnal action now is in the hotel's yuppified bar.

I had been tracking a group of traveling Americans who were not exactly tourists yet not quite a delegation, and I caught up with them in Hue. Sons and Daughters in Touch, as they are known, had approximately sixty-five out of their total membership of more than 2,000 fanning out in teams around Vietnam to the exact spots where their fathers had died during the Vietnam War. Some would call this a morbid errand, but to the Sons and Daughters, most of whom were very young when their fathers went to Vietnam, the journey had taken on the mystique of a mission.

On the terrace of her hotel overlooking the Perfume River, Cindy Rheinheimer, a 38-year-old public school teacher and divorced mother of twin teenage girls, told me about her visit. The previous day she had been to the site where her father, Cpl. Richard Sanders, a 22-year-old medic from California, had been killed in 1967. Rheinheimer was 3 at the time, so in a sense she was looking for a father she'd never really known. "I just have a vague memory of my father sitting in a Naugahyde chair flicking a cigarette lighter shaped like a cannon," she said. "He'd been a cowboy growing up around Santa Maria, spending a lot of time on a cattle ranch, and he had guns. He was working in a factory that manufactured Columbia records, still trying to figure out what to do with his life, when he was drafted."

Though he'd hunted as a teenager, Sanders chose to be a medic rather than a rifleman. Rheinheimer showed me a picture of her father kissing her as a toddler, another of her father in uniform looking straight ahead, and a very pretty one of herself at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. "The night before I was to go to my dad's site," she said, "I called home and told my boyfriend I couldn't bear this, I just didn't think I could do it. He said, 'Take a deep breath, this is what you went to do.'" She left her hotel the next morning nervous, her stomach in knots. Having the radio operator's diary from her father's unit, she knew where to go. "My dad had flown in on a chopper to a ridge they called Hill 82," she continued. "His company was on a search-and-destroy mission northeast of Saigon, part of the Ninth Infantry Division. A couple of guys were hit and my dad went and got them out to safety. Then another man was hit and my dad went to get him, and somebody threw a grenade that killed both my dad and the wounded guy.

"When I got near the top of Hill 82, I was so surprised. I thought it would be darker, closed in, a jungle. I didn't expect it to be so beautiful and peaceful and light. I was looking out over a river. I just lost it entirely. As soon as I cried and started to actually look around I felt so much better. We all imagine death as dark, and I found this place just filled with light—if there's an afterlife I hope that's it." Rheinheimer took a sip of her Coke and looked away, out over the Perfume River where several little fishing boats went by carrying Vietnamese families who live in them. "I had asked my daughters—we're Catholics—to find some Scripture. They'd e-mailed me three passages from the Bible and said, 'Tell grandpa hi for us.' I lit some incense and laid down flowers and choked my way through the Scriptures. Then I left a little note for my dad, just telling him my girls and I are fine and we'll try to make you proud of us until we're all together again. That was it, really, that was my pilgrimage."

It's a commonplace that when you return to a location you once spent important time in—a childhood home, a school, a lake in the woods where you first fell in love—what you're looking for is not the location itself but the old, which is to say the young, you. I had no interest in that, given how miserable I'd been the first time in Vietnam and how glad I was to be there now in the midst of such national optimism. Yet from time to time I was pulled back to the war. In our flight to Ho Chi Minh City, there was a twilight moment as we approached Tan Son Nhut Airport and saw gun emplacements around the perimeter. Holdovers, precautionary defense, warning, declaration: Don't fuck with us. Whichever, the reminder would not be lost on anyone with designs other than friendly. From the Caravelle Hotel in 1972 I became accustomed to flares in the distance as mortars and other night firing began; the nocturnal action at the Caravelle now is in the hotel's own noisy, yuppified bar, Saigon Saigon.

Old Saigon has become a bustling Los Angeles sprawl, a commercial churn much larger than the cultural and political capital of Hanoi. We went to dinner at the home of a businesswoman named Jocelyn Tran, whom I had met in Hanoi. Both she and her husband, Toan Nguyen, left Saigon as children and grew up in Southern California, where they met in their early 30s. Jocelyn's father was an officer in the South Vietnamese Army, and Toan's parents had a prospering pharmaceutical company. "My parents got out just in time in '75," Jocelyn said. "They were very bitter and vowed never to return, but then my father came back in 1999 for a short visit before he died. My mother returned briefly this year, but she made the whole trip just to say two words to me, 'come home,' by which she meant California."

Toan's parents, on the other hand, chose to retire in Saigon, living far more modestly than they once did but nonetheless in their native land. They could not return to their former home, a mansion now occupied by their old servant, who is permitted to stay there until she dies, at which point the estate will belong to the government. "This is still a police state," said Toan, who designs computer software, "though the government's heavy hand is lighter

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than it was a few years ago. I don't go past my childhood home because it is too painful, and my father refuses even to go into the neighborhood." I could wince a little for Toan's family, but what I really regretted was not having the time to look up the family servant and see how she was enjoying the old proprietor's digs, lounging in the rooms she used to mop. Is there a just god somewhere who would mandate that destiny for all servants, all masters?

Jocelyn and Toan live very well, with servants themselves, and Jocelyn is the country representative of a firm that manufactures women's clothing for labels such as Victoria's Secret and Henri Bendel, a globalized effort employing local workers. A trade union does exist in Vietnam, but it is an umbrella organization belonging more to the government than to the labor force, which means its independence is compromised. Factory workers, according to a regional specialist named Kate Jellema, who teaches Vietnamese history and culture at Marlboro College, make much more than they would as peasant farmers, but they often have to work far from their families, whom they may see only once a month or less. Meanwhile, their rather toothless union, typical of the Third World, cannot press for minimum wages or maximum hours. "Opening up markets gives jobs to people who wouldn't otherwise have jobs at all," Jellema told me, "and it provides entrepreneurial opportunities for the middle class, but conditions are substandard and there is no structure for improving them. Those who work for multinational companies like Coca-Cola or Victoria's Secret or Nike do better than those in small Vietnamese businesses, because the foreigners are at least susceptible to outside pressures."

KAREN CALDICOTT

Jocelyn Tran and Toan Nguyen are raising their young son Matthew in Vietnam and are as conflicted as their son's name implies. "I am bicultural," Jocelyn said, "and it's not easy. I want to be Vietnamese, yet I'm accustomed to American physical comforts. I had no hardships growing up in America, and I'm embarrassed now at how people live here compared to how I live. I'm too American, too Vietnamese."

In their split allegiance between East and West, Jocelyn and Toan reminded me of a couple I met in Danang during the war. The husband was the Vietnamese director of Mobil Oil, the wife a professor of philosophy at the University of Danang. Although she was a staunch anti-Communist who loved going to New York and Paris, she provided the clearest reason I'd ever heard why the United States should not intervene in a society it does not understand. Praising Ngo Dinh Diem, the South Vietnamese president who had been assassinated in 1963 when our government withdrew its support from him, she discoursed on his skill as a statesman, how he'd have made peace with the North Vietnamese, and how splendid a patriot he was, the last piece of praise catching in her throat so that she doubled back on it to declare, "In fact, I think Ngo Dinh Diem was without doubt the second-greatest patriot in the entire history of my country."

I bit on that one and gullibly asked who was the first greatest.

"Oh, Ho Chi Minh of course."

At that moment it was clear that if this philosopher's two seemingly irreconcilable assertions were true—according to the American left Diem was a puppet who was dropped when he proved both too corrupt and too independent, while Ho was George Washington and Abraham Lincoln combined; according to the right Ho was Stalinist and Diem was fine until he betrayed the cause—then the United States had no rational purpose sticking its nose, much less 2.15 million bodies, into what was taking place in Vietnam, regardless of whether the dispute was a revolution, civil war, insurgency against foreign invaders, anticolonialist struggle, reunification drive, or some of all of these. From today's perspective, what will we do if and when Iraq is partitioned and one of the parts, let's say an anti-American one, decides to reunite the others? We lost 58,000 Americans trying to maintain two Vietnams; Vietnam lost fifty times that many, almost 3 million, yet today there is one Vietnam.

Though a war in which one side is financed by a foreign country isn't properly a civil one, there is an aspect in the psychology of the north-south relationship in Vietnam that bears comparison with the American South after our Civil War. The Vietnamese southerners who sided with Americans are to a substantial degree a defeated people and have the attitudes and resentments of losers. They don't refer to Ho Chi Minh City as anything but Saigon, they smirk about northerners who run things, they take a *Schadenfreude* pleasure in pointing out police corruption and government failure, and they have still—a quarter-century after the war ended—not been able to get jobs equal to their preparation and abilities.

Truong, a middle-aged man who was our guide in the Mekong Delta, had been a teacher and school administrator before the war. In the war itself he was a low-ranking South Vietnamese officer. Like several other southerners we met, his job was well below his former status. When he smiled he showed gold-tipped teeth, an emblem of class, but Truong's smiles were rueful. "As soon as the war was over," he said, "I was sent to a re-education camp to change from capitalist to Communist." He paused and laughed, "But now we're all capitalists again because that's what the government wants."

In 1972 we had filmed a passionately independent Catholic priest in Saigon named Chan Tin, who was in hiding from the South Vietnamese government. I remembered him as coiled and intense, with dark hair and a visage radiating anger at both the South Vietnamese government and the American intruders. At 83 he no longer conducts all the services at his large church in Ho Chi Minh City, but he holds masses regularly and gives occasional sermons. His dark hair has vanished into gossamer wisps of white at the back of his head, and what he radiates today is a serenity that occasionally gives way to his pride at having a relationship with the Hanoi authorities not dissimilar to the one he had with the Saigon government. "The South Vietnamese gave me five years at hard labor," he said, "and after the North won in 1975, for a short time the Communists thought I was with them because I was part of the patriotic front opposed to the Saigon regime and the Americans. They soon saw I was for human rights above all. I spoke against the detainment of political prisoners, so they detained me and made me a political prisoner." These days Chan Tin preaches when he wants to and has no fear of the government. "I want another regime," he said, "but I want it by evolution, not revolution. Now there is amelioration. There is more democracy, some liberty, more freedom of the press. The

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economy is open, but for progress we need full political liberty."

Back in Hanoi, we saw a capital with the vitality of the country surrounding it. When the Vietnamese did not finish their work during the day, they took it home at night. Buoyancy was the national mood, the tone of Vietnam's intercourse with foreigners. I have to admit I did not want to go home.

As for the Americans, we ran into the West Virginia Trade Mission, holding what they called a Country Team Briefing before heading into the provinces. Doctors Without Borders was in town to help contain the SARS epidemic by setting up an isolation wing at Bach Mai Hospital, which had been leveled in the 1972 Christmas bombing. Connecticut College students were having a street-level lesson in the history and culture of Vietnam. A nimbus of contrition hung over the expeditions. "How I wished," Graham Greene concluded in *The Quiet American*, "there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry." It was impossible to be in Vietnam without wondering whether, perhaps in far fewer than thirty years, we will be saying that about Iraq. ■

US DRUG FIRMS MAKE THE CHOICE CLEAR: OUR OUTRAGEOUS PROFITS OR YOUR LIFE.

Offering Hope—at a Price

KATHARINE GREIDER

"America's Pharmaceutical Companies: New Medicines. New Hope." This was the tag line of full-page ads appearing in national magazines last year as part of a campaign by drug-industry trade group Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA) to gussy up its increasingly negative image. The ads featured handsome, smiling people in lab coats—just some of the "50,000 researchers at America's pharmaceutical companies [who are] dedicating their lives to making all our lives better." Perusing its promotional materials, you might get the idea the pharmaceutical industry is a nonprofit research operation out to save the human race by putting every disease that afflicts us "on the path to extinction," as one industry spokesperson put it.

KAREN CALDICOTT

But this message of hope has a dark side. Faced with a proposal to limit drug prices, industry representatives invariably respond by insisting the measure will put an end to research into terrifying diseases like Alzheimer's and cancer, hitting us where we live. "I can guarantee," PhRMA's Richard Smith warned reporters last year, "if you aren't already today, at some point in your lives every one in this room will be a patient in need of medical care. The question is: Will a medicine be there for you?"

Here is the industry driving home its point: "'If you touch our profits, the laboratories will close and you'll all die,'" says Alan Sager, a professor of health services at Boston University School of Public Health who has studied the drug industry. "It's a terror tactic."

Certainly pharmaceutical companies take on risk by spending very large sums in their laboratories. Comparing numbers from PhRMA's annual member survey with government appropriations, the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology estimates that big pharmaceutical companies sponsored 47 percent of all biomedical R&D in 2000. This represented a huge increase in R&D spending by Big Pharma in the latter half of the 1990s, with the government's share of total R&D declining to 39 percent despite substantial increases in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget.

But some frankly doubt PhRMA's figures, derived from confidential reports by member companies. Though pharma execs hold up R&D spending as a justification for just about everything they do, they hold the details of this spending very close to the chest. Examinations by various advocacy groups of drugmakers' financial reports have yielded much lower estimates of their R&D budgets. For example, while manufacturers reported spending over $20 billion on R&D in 1999, Sager and colleague Deborah Socolar arrive at "a more skeptical estimate," based on financial filings, of about $10 billion.

Perhaps more important than the question of how much companies spend on R&D—assume it's a large and increasing amount—is what those drug-development dollars are yielding. After all, in asserting the need to charge high prices for drugs, industry spokespeople implicitly suggest their R&D has enormous social value—that it proffers "new hope" to the sick and dying. And indeed few would deny that the history of the pharmaceutical industry is, in part, the history of human progress: from vaccines to antibiotics and, more recently, an array of AIDS drugs, some medicines have produced benefits beyond measure. But brush aside the industry platitudes about new cures for a close look at products coming through R&D pipelines, and one finds that too often their value is more commercial than social.

Well over half the drugs approved in the United States between 1989 and 2000 were "product-line extensions" using old active ingredients, according to a study released in May 2002 by the National Institute for Health Care Management. As the pace of new drug approvals accelerated sharply over the past decade, "standard-rated" product-line extensions—those deemed by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to add no significant benefit over already available drugs—accounted for 62 percent of this growth. These standard-rated product-line extensions also

Katharine Greider is a writer living in New York City. This article is adapted from The Big Fix *and reprinted by arrangement with PublicAffairs, a member of the Perseus Books Group.* *Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.*

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contributed most to increased consumer spending on new drugs in the five years leading up to 2000. With true breakthroughs few and far between, drug companies are flooding the market with new dosages, new combinations and otherwise rejiggered forms of their older medicines.

Generally speaking the drug industry does not expend resources to develop medicines that might be an enormous boon for public health but offer little prospect for commercial gain. For example, a tiny percentage of new drugs brought to market are to treat diseases like malaria that kill huge numbers of poor people around the world. If this seems natural enough—these are businesspeople after all, not public-health activists—then perhaps it will seem more surprising that American taxpayers support a portion of the research to develop drugs over which drug companies claim sole proprietorship. Proprietorship and, of course, the right to charge whatever they please.

"If you call up and ask the company did the government help in the development of this drug, they will say no," says James Love, an economist and head of the Consumer Project on Technology, founded by Ralph Nader. The Feds aren't keeping score either. But it's clear that public support is critical, especially to the development of truly innovative drugs for serious illnesses. In the early 1990s Love and his colleagues did an in-depth study tracking the history of thirty innovative and important drugs approved between 1987 and 1991. They found that half these drugs had been developed with help from the federal government. For eleven of them, the government had been involved at every stage of development, from discovery to human trials. Of particular interest: The government-funded drugs were priced significantly higher than other medicines. In 1993 Senate testimony, Love and Nader reported that the National Cancer Institute supported human trials on 92 percent of cancer drugs developed since 1955. And in 1998 the *Boston Globe* took a close look at thirty-five important—and top-selling—drugs the FDA had approved over the previous five years. All but two had been brought through the R&D pipeline with the help of NIH or FDA funds.

While most big firms' profits declined in 2001, drug company profits were up by 33 percent, according to a Public Citizen analysis.

What do taxpayers get in exchange? Well, they get a new medicine. The question is whether they can afford to use it. According to a report by Representative Bernie Sanders's office, the breast-cancer drug tamoxifen, which costs Canadians about $34 per treatment, sets back an uninsured American more than $240—and was the product of 140 clinical trials sponsored by our government. Uncle Sam more or less encourages university researchers and drug companies to take the money and run. Twenty years ago the government owned the rights to research conducted under its grants, but 1980s legislation aimed at commercializing scientific research changed all that, giving government grantees the right to patent and sell their work.

At the end of the day, industry poor-mouthing about the burdens of drug R&D is unconvincing for a simple reason: For decades, pharmaceuticals has been one of the most profitable businesses in America. While the average Fortune 500 company saw declining profits in a difficult environment in 2001, drug companies on the list actually boosted their profits by 33 percent, according to an analysis of Fortune 500 data by Public Citizen. These titan drugmakers took 18.5 percent of revenues as profit—eight times the median for all other Fortune 500 companies. In other words, whatever the unique exigencies of pharmaceutical R&D, the big drug companies have managed to develop drugs and sell them at higher profit margins than are enjoyed by the biggest oil companies, entertainment companies, auto makers and commercial banks.

During the year 2002, drug-industry leaders and stockwatchers complained of declining fortunes due to patent expirations, regulatory action, manufacturing glitches, lower earnings and disappointing research pipelines—as if Big Pharma were staggering, ever so slightly, under its own weight. But it remains to be seen where this trend is going. Recently released drug-sales figures for 2002 show a 12 percent increase in North America over the previous year, a slump most business leaders would consider nothing to cry about. And industry folks were considerably cheered by the outcome of November's midterm elections, which seemed to insure they'd receive plenty of TLC on key issues like a Medicare drug benefit.

In the meantime, the weight of Big Pharma is one that Americans have borne and continue to bear disproportionately. Our "free pricing," vast population and sky's-the-limit demand are what drive drug profits worldwide. Of course, even this basic fact creates occasion for dispute. While many consumer groups and politicians say it's our prices that are out of whack, industry supporters insist other wealthy consumers—the Europeans and the Japanese, for example—should pay more for drugs, and that their refusal to do so, unfair as it is, leaves the responsibility for R&D in American hands. There it is again: Do anything to curtail costs in the United States, and you can forget about a cure for Alzheimer's.

Perhaps there's another way to look at it. The drug industry's higher-than-average profits—the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—has fueled increasing investments in R&D. This means that, as in other businesses, the consumer not only pays the cost of making the product but subsidizes the growth of the industry itself. That the drug industry has managed to elevate its development effort to the status of sacred cow—touch it and lives will be lost—obscures a slew of important questions. Have all these R&D dollars been efficiently deployed from a business standpoint, much less from the public's point of view? Does the industry really need to grow at a double-digit clip in order to produce medicines and make money? In the past ten years R&D spending grew at about 13 percent per year, says Princeton economist Uwe Reinhardt. This rate of increase, he calculates, gets you to $595 billion by the year 2025. "The question I raise is, Well, who's to say that's the right number? And then the pharmaceutical industry says, Well, the market." But when buyers try to limit drug spending—when state governments establish methods for bargaining down prices under Medicaid, for example—drugmakers tend not to accept these efforts as reflecting the wisdom of a free market. As Reinhardt observes, "When the market responds, they scream."

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If the outcome of the industry's profit-driven R&D is especially stark in poorer nations, nothing guarantees that it reflects the public-health priorities even of wealthy Americans. Do we really want to pay for the invention of baldness remedies instead of getting more important drugs at lower cost so they could help more people? If we were in charge, would we order Pfizer's rivals to get cracking on something to compete with Viagra (as a number have done) or with cholesterol-reducing Lipitor (already in a crowded class)? Obviously we don't get to make these calls; we don't even have access to information that would let us lay it all on the table and see where R&D resources are being spent. All we do is sign the checks. Have American consumers, disgruntled about costs but confident our dollars were going to Project Banish Disease, in fact been drafted into Operation Grow Big Pharma? Are we really to believe they're one and the same?

Industry reps imply that restraints on drug spending would cut straight into the muscle of research on breakthrough drugs. But others point to drug-company budget items where there seems to be plenty of fat: profits yes, but also, and more important, marketing. Consumer advocate Families USA found that in 2000 and 2001, the nine companies selling the most drugs to American seniors spent more money—in most cases more than twice as much—on marketing and administration than on R&D. Indeed, whether their increasing R&D investments pan out or disappoint, drugmakers will work assiduously—because they're businesses and not public-health advocates—to recoup those investments and sustain high earnings growth by selling lots of product to American consumers. And friends, they have ways of doing that. ■

REJECTIONISTS ON BOTH SIDES ARE TRYING TO UNDERMINE THE FLEDGLING INITIATIVE.

On the Road (Map)

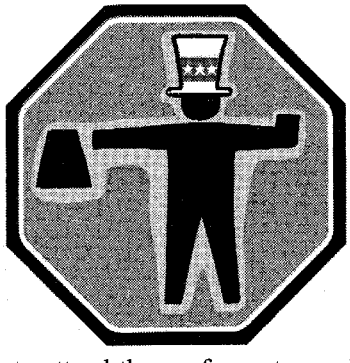
HILLEL SCHENKER

We asked two veteran commentators to evaluate the latest Middle East peace plan. Their comments follow. —*The Editors*

Tel Aviv

So here we are. It's déjà vu all over again. Or is it?

Last time around, in 1991 following the Gulf War, Bush 41 and his forceful partner, Secretary of State James Baker, pushed and cajoled all the relevant parties, including a very reluctant Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, to attend the Madrid peace conference. That led to the 1993 Oslo accords, a process that was suspended after the breakdown of the Camp David summit in 2000 and the outbreak of the second intifada.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Now, following the latest Gulf War, the formation of a new Palestinian government and the official US presentation of the road map "to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," it appears as if a new window of opportunity for possible progress toward peace has opened.

But is there an Israeli partner in this process?

The government formed by Ariel Sharon after the elections this past February is probably the most right-wing in Israeli history. The socioeconomic policy of almost all the ministers, led by Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, is pure Thatcherism. Netanyahu's recipe for jump-starting an economy mired in prolonged recession is a combination of tax breaks for the rich and privatization coupled with massive layoffs in the public sector and drastic budget cuts that will seriously damage Israel's social safety net. The only coalition party with a slight social consciousness is the National Religious Party (NRP), but that is counterbalanced by the party's dedication to funding settlements in the occupied territories.

When it comes to peace and security, Sharon, at least in terms of his public pronouncements, is to the left of the overwhelming majority of his ministers. While he has declared his support for a Palestinian state and a willingness to make "painful concessions," his own Likud Party passed an internal resolution opposing a Palestinian state. Most of the Likud ministers oppose a two-state solution, and they are backed by the four extreme right-wing National Union and NRP ministers.

The joker in the coalition is the centrist neoliberal/anticlerical/defend-the-downtrodden-middle-class party, Shinui. The surprise of the last elections, Shinui won fifteen seats in the Knesset and five ministers (out of twenty), and succeeded in driving the ultra-Orthodox out of the government. When the TV anchors want to consult "the left" in the government, the smiling face of party leader and Justice Minister Tommy Lapid appears on the screen. Lapid, a Holocaust survivor and journeyman journalist, was a supporter of annexation and Greater Israel for more than twenty years, but his views changed after the first intifada began in 1987. Lapid supported the Oslo process and an agreement with the Palestinians based on land for peace. While one of the other Shinui ministers came out of the right-wing Tsomet Party, three are graduates of the left-wing Meretz Party, who look at the road map as an opportunity to move toward peace.

The key question is, Exactly what does Sharon want? If he decides that he wants to go toward peace, he will easily be able to get a majority to back him, composed of a minority of the Likud and most of Shinui, backed by Labor, Meretz and the Arab parties, who have promised him a political safety net if he does the right (left) thing.

My guess is that Sharon will not have the psychological or

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political strength to break the pattern of his entire public career. However, if the Bush Administration were to seriously promote the road map, with its plan for a viable Palestinian state by 2005, Sharon would respond favorably.

This is where the big series of "ifs" comes in. *If* the Arab world, Tony Blair and the Quartet partners who co-formulated the road map (the United Nations, the European Union and Russia) help Colin Powell and his State Department team win the day in favor of an active US engagement in the process, and *if* the new Palestinian government succeeds in reducing terrorism, an Israeli partner will grudgingly emerge. And *if* the Israeli public makes the connection between the deteriorating economic situation and the lack of peace, the Israeli political map could be rearranged. Unfortunately, Israelis tend to be a prime example of the theory formulated by Daniel Kahneman, the Israeli-born Nobel economics prizewinner: that people tend to base their economic (and political) decisions more on emotions than on rational thinking.

Sharon was elected because a majority of the Israeli public despaired of having a Palestinian partner for peace, despite the fact that polls consistently demonstrate that a majority support a two-state solution and evacuation of most of the territories and settlements. The new Palestinian government creates an opportunity to overcome this barrier, and the initial pronouncements of Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, *a k a* Abu Mazen, against the suicide bombers are a positive step in that direction. Unfortunately, the night that his government was confirmed, a suicide bomber struck at the entrance of a Tel Aviv club (a few blocks from my house), killing a waitress and two musicians and wounding more than fifty others. This may have been a response to the Israeli assassination of two Palestinians the day before.

Meanwhile, Sharon and Abu Mazen have met, but the deadly terror continues, Sharon refuses to announce a settlement freeze and rejectionists on both sides try to undermine the fledgling political initiative. The Americans are the key to breaking this cycle of violence. Will Bush 43, who has moved from isolationism to a pre-emptive, Pax Americana approach to world affairs, take the additional step of becoming a committed conflict-resolution facilitator in the Middle East, a step that is also presumably in America's interest? Highly unlikely. However, if he does, and if he is successful, he will gain the gratitude of the majority of Israelis and Palestinians. A recent poll published by Tel Aviv University's Steinmetz Center for Peace Research indicates that 65 percent of Jewish Israelis support the road map. Even among Likud supporters, a clear majority of 58 percent support it. And if Sharon's worried about the response of the American Jewish community as the 2004 elections draw near, he should rest assured that the large majority are more peace oriented than their self-appointed leaders in AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, who have expressed reservations about the road map. According to a poll initiated by Americans for Peace Now and the Arab American Institute, 71.8 percent believe that the best way to fight terrorism is a combination of force and negotiations, and 67.5 percent support the evacuation of settlements in the context of a peace treaty.

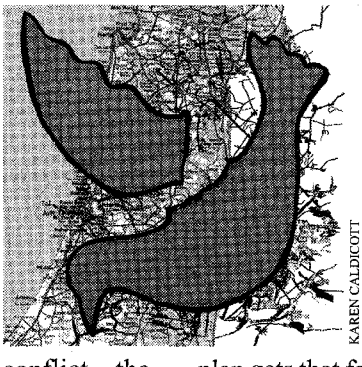
Powell has come and gone, and if Bush doesn't give his Secretary of State the same type of backing that his father gave to James Baker, then Israelis and Palestinians will probably have to wait for the entire troika—Sharon, Arafat and Bush—to leave the political stage before negotiations are resumed, with many more lives lost on both sides. ■

THE CHIEF FLAW OF THIS PLAN IS ITS FAILURE TO FOCUS ON THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION.

Road Map or Road Kill?

RASHID I. KHALIDI

Apparently having learned nothing from the collapse of earlier efforts, the mainly American drafters of the road map included several features that almost guarantee its failure. One is the absence of a fixed timetable. Thus either party (in practice the Israelis, if the past is any indication) can hold up movement from stage to stage and within each stage. Another feature is the addition of interim phases to a process that is already prolonged. This means, in effect, the postponement of the most difficult aspect of the resolution of the conflict—the negotiation of issues like settlements, sovereignty, Jerusalem and refugees—until a third phase, which, if past practice is any guide, means indefinitely.



KAREN CALDICOTT

The theory of interim agreements, beloved of pro-Israeli "peace processors" in the Bush I and Clinton administrations, should have been buried for good by now, after the spectacular failure of the Madrid-Oslo approach, which relied on such phased interim agreements. But this theory is resuscitated once more in the road map, in the form of a gratuitous proposal for "an independent Palestinian state with provisional borders and attributes of sovereignty." If the plan gets that far, this is a sure recipe for endless discord, which will be exploited by Israel to procrastinate further, while keeping the essentials of the military occupation and most Israeli settlements in business indefinitely, and restricting Palestinian control to as little of the occupied territories as possible—40 percent of the West Bank, if Ariel Sharon has his way.

It is here that the road map is the most flawed. For in failing

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to focus on the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, about to enter its thirty-seventh year, and on Israeli settlements, which underpin that occupation, the road map misses an opportunity to end this conflict. Instead, it concentrates on Palestinian violence and how to combat it—as if it came out of nowhere, and as if, were it to be halted, the situation of occupation and settlement would be normal. This is a reflection of the preponderant US role in the drafting of this document. It is also a sign of why it will probably fail, for official Washington is obsessively fixated on Palestinian violence as the root cause of all the problems between Palestinians and Israelis.

This obsession has led to an American focus on cosmetic changes in the Palestinian leadership, like the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) as prime minister. His new government cannot possibly succeed in reducing Palestinian violence without a rollback of the tide of settlement and a release on the chokehold of the occupation. But that is unlikely to happen, for the Bush Administration's obsession with Palestinian violence to the exclusion of all else will probably lead to a continued bias in favor of the Sharon/Likud interpretation of the road map. By this interpretation, before Israel is required to do anything, the Palestinian security services, eviscerated by two years of pitiless Israeli attacks, must be reconstituted by Abu Mazen's choice to head them, Muhammad Dahlan, and then must wage a relentless war against the Palestinian factions that attack Israeli occupation forces and settlers in the occupied territories as well as civilians inside Israel. Palestinians complain that this means starting a Palestinian civil war before there is any indication that the Sharon government, dominated by hard-line supporters of the extension of settlements and the continued repression of the Palestinians, will do any of the things that are required of it. Nominally, the road map requires that both sides take steps simultaneously: Palestinian action against militant factions should take place alongside Israel's dismantling of settlements, and releasing its grip on the more than 3 million people of the occupied territories, who have lived for most of the past two years under siege, curfew and constant threat of Israeli attack.

But with the neocons riding high in Washington, with the Pentagon having taken over many of the responsibilities of the State Department and the CIA, and with the Bush Administration already in campaign mode and the Israeli lobby flexing its grotesquely well-developed muscles, there should be little doubt which interpretation of the road map will prevail in Washington. All that remains is to await precisely how this latest fledgling dove will turn into road kill, and what such a development will portend.

Should the Sharonistas who dominate the Bush Administration continue to prevail, as they have in nearly every Washington showdown since September 2001, not only will this effort fail, as they and Sharon desire, but the Palestinians will be blamed for it. There will undoubtedly continue to be enough Palestinian violence to justify this, though it will pale alongside the routine, mechanized violence of the occupation. Beyond the daily brutality of a foreign army policing and denying the rights of a civilian population while their land is being stolen for the benefit of settlers, force has been used indiscriminately in heavily populated areas to crush Palestinian resistance, as per the words of Lieut. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israeli army chief of staff: "The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people."

Israel can probably continue to rely on the existing American media double standard, whereby Palestinian civilians slaughtered in packed urban neighborhoods by battlefield weapons like heavy machine guns, helicopter gunship missiles and tank cannons are only "collateral damage" in the search to assassinate militants, and do not count as much as Israeli civilians slaughtered in Israeli cities by Palestinian suicide bombers, while the three-to-one ratio of Palestinians to Israelis killed (most on both sides being civilian) is constantly ignored. Thus, over one ten-day period, twenty Palestinians, mostly civilians, were killed, and went unnamed and unmourned in the US media, which instead focused on three Israelis killed in Tel Aviv by a suicide bomber.

In the long run, it will not be possible to oblige Palestinians to protect the expansion of settlements and the continuation of occupation, which is what the Oslo accords did; during the decade after negotiations began in 1991, the settler population more than doubled. If this is what the road map tries to do, it will fail. It remains to be seen if even a fair implementation of this profoundly flawed document can revive the vanishing prospects of a two-state solution, or if this has been rendered untenable by thirty-six years of relentless settlement and occupation dedicated to sabotaging the possibility of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. If so, Palestinians and Israelis will have to find a new means of living together peacefully in the same land, a prospect that daily seems ever more remote. ■

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EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)
ested in distinguishing between critiquing Israel's government and being anti-Semitic. While I don't believe that most leftists are anti-Semitic, I also don't believe they give a damn about the Israeli and American-Jewish side of the conflict. Thus, rightly or wrongly, the left has come to be seen as anti-Semitic and pro-Arab. Earn our trust back—we want to be with you!

JONATHAN D. RUBIN

Chicago

■ Philip Green goes astray when he denies that Israel occupies "an exceptional place on the left's political hit list," or, if it does, that this is due to Israel's place at the center of US imperial enterprises. For decades, Israel has been the linchpin in the schema of both left and right and in the unlikely consensus of interests in both the Christian and Muslim worlds, which all depend on Fortress Israel to inspire or intimidate their constituencies.

That Israel has also served as the obsession for so many leftist groups is a result of a similar consensus that has persisted since Stalin's time. Historically, elements of the left have defended thugs and dictators who cloaked themselves in leftist rhetoric. Apologizing for Stalin or Mao or Pol Pot derailed international social justice movements for decades. Likewise, the antiwar movement, like its immediate antecedent, the antiglobalization movement, has lost much to its inability to get over the Israel question. Romanticization of Arab violence against Israelis has cost many left movements moral currency. The failure to stand against violence—whether of soldiers in tanks and jets or suicidal zealots—means the left cannot use its most valuable tactic: nonviolence, by which Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. brought progressive change to billions. The Israeli-Palestinian crisis should teach us that violence offers no solution. The left should offer a real alternative: peace, coexistence and tolerance.

ETHAN MICHAELI

GREEN REPLIES

New York City

■ Apparently I fell asleep and woke up in a parallel universe in which I'm suffering from early Alzheimer's and wrote a bizarre article of which I have no memory. Alternatively, I'm still in my original universe, but in it a serious magazine like *Tikkun* has an obsequious shlemiel (OS) as its "media editor." I guess "media" doesn't include books, those things you have to *read* and understand the words therein. So these remarks are addressed not to him, but to *Nation* readers who have better things to do than reread my article (which would put them two ahead of the "media editor"). In any event, Michael Lerner's views about Israel, some of which I happen to share, are of no intrinsic interest to anyone but Lernerites, and I didn't write about either them or him. As it happens, he wrote (using very clear words, so no need to call up and ask him what they meant) a shabby, self-serving piece in the February 12 online *Wall Street Journal*, in which he purported to discuss "left-wing anti-Semitism," but adduced as evidence only instances of either "Israel-bashing" or Lerner-bashing. I politely refrained from explaining how the latter might be justified. As to the former, I can only tiresomely repeat that although the world is full of people who are both anti-Semites and anti-Israel, the one is neither necessarily an instance of, nor identical with, the other. Even exaggerated, unjust, wrongheaded or malicious instances of Israel-bashing are not evidence of anti-Semitism. They may lead one to suspect its existence, but one verifies the suspicion by looking for anti-Semitic expressions or actions. To keep piling up more and more instances of "Israel-bashing" in pursuit of this goal is just to be chasing one's own tail; it shows an ignorance of how to reason logically and, coincidentally, has the effect of conjuring up more anti-Semites than may actually exist. We already have quite enough.

As for ANSWER, I have no desire to speak for it (see Steve Kowit's letter). But I will say I'm tired of the libel, which keeps going round and round, about "questioning the right of [Israel] to exist." Questioning the right of the current state to exist as such, yes; but the change to a different kind of state that various people (ANSWER included) desire, even at its most extreme, could be accomplished by the Knesset in five minutes without a shot being fired or a single Jew being discriminated against, let alone killed.

One final point: OS seems to think that to acquit the Bay Area Coalition of "anti-Semitism" in the disinvitation of Michael Lerner is to "legitimate" their action. I guess he lives in the sad, narrow universe in which everything is either "good for the Jews" or "bad for the Jews" and can be judged on no other criterion.

I don't know about the cases James Berger speaks of, as he provides only one detail (which suggests imbecility more than bad faith), but I'm sure there *is* anti-Semitism on the left, as there is everywhere there are non-Jews. What I argued, though, is that among the large segment of the American left that is unsympathetic to Israel or its policies, I see no evidence that this tends to translate into anti-Semitism; nor is it in any important respect the same thing (though the same people may hold both beliefs). Several responses attempt to refute this argument by invoking a "double standard" operating against Israel. Thus Ethan Michaeli charges that "the left" has been soft on the violence of national liberation and Communism, even while condemning Israeli nationalism and violence. The accusation is not without merit—I would myself plead guilty to "softness" on the Algerian FLN, for example. However, although leftists may have been mistaken in our support of wars of national liberation, there is no double standard involved, for the simple reason that from a non-Zionist standpoint, Israel's origins lie in a war not of liberation but of conquest. Israel was the colonizer, not the colonized; it expelled not settlers but inhabitants. I must confess that as a young socialist, despite being deeply moved by Ruth Gruber's account of the voyage of the Exodus, I still looked on the events in Palestine about the way I looked on the Russian invasion of Finland seven years before. Yes, survivors of the Holocaust should have been admitted to Britain and America without limit or question; that did not happen because of anti-Semitism endemic in both societies and was a great crime. But the one place on earth it was a tragic disaster for displaced Jews to settle, by force, was Palestine. Only a determination to live with the Palestinians as equals, rather than dominate and displace them, could have (perhaps) generated a tolerable outcome. There are all sorts of reasons, some most understandable, why that determination was not made, but history can't be rewritten and is often unforgiving. And appending "anti-Semitism" to every criticism, valid or invalid, of the left just debases the concept.

For some letter writers, this moral balancing act is unacceptable—especially from a Jew, as Jonathan Rubin suggests, reasserting the Israel/Jewish identity I rejected. For such persons, to side with the would-be destroyers of Israel is to side with anti-Semitism, even if one is Jewish. I know of few Jews who would endorse "driving Israel into the sea," but there are thousands who think that an integrated pluralist state to which Palestinians have the "right of return," and within which the territory is divided more equably, is the only just solution. Steve Kowit's brief for ANSWER may be an extreme example of this approach, but it proposes destroying nothing and no one, and it's not "anti-Semitic," just anti-Israel. As for loyalties, I have tried to speak only for those for whom Israel is definitely not "us," whether out of generic hostility (Kowit), or angry rejection of existing policies (Alan Meyers). If he insists on being "fiercely pro-Israel," Rubin should speak to people like Meyers, or the many Jews in Israel who reject colonialism and militarism. In any event, I totally repudiate the idea of unquestioning loyalty to a state. I should add that the fact that Israel is a formal democracy is of no relevance here. Majority votes are the fairest way to make decisions among a group that has agreed to be bound by them; but they can't make falsehoods true, or turn wrongs into rights.

Finally, some respondents thought I was whitewashing the phrase "the Jewish Lobby." I agree it's problematic, but I think it's defensible as long as one means by it not Jews generally but only those Jewish organizations within Washington's pro-Israel lobby that achieve influence by purporting to speak for Jews generally and to be able to deliver "the Jewish vote"—and as long as the people to whom one is speaking can be trusted to understand that it means nothing more than that.

PHILIP GREEN

CLARIFICATION

■ In "FCC: Public Be Damned" (June 2) John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney neglected to note that they are founders of the media-reform network Free Press, one of the groups named.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Sex and the City: The Erotic Dreamworld of Christian Schad

ARTHUR C. DANTO

From the mid to the late 1920s, the German painter Christian Schad produced a group of paintings like little else in modern art. Possessing the translucent clarity of Renaissance portraits, they project a nighttown vision of *Mitteleuropa* worldlings, bathed in a mood of obsessive eroticism. The *oeuvre* of a great many artists contains an X portfolio, so to speak, of erotic images. But I can think of no painter of Schad's stature whose work, in the few years in which he touched greatness, was so totally given over to erotomania that everything associated with the personages he portrays—a flower, an accessory, a human companion—seems to signal preferences in some exotic code of sexual specialization.

Some ten years earlier, as a member of the Dada movement, Schad attracted a certain notice through a body of work that could not contrast more vividly with the extraordinary paintings of the 1920s. It consisted of small experimental photograms in which bits of fabric and scraps of paper were arranged in abstract compositions on photosensitive paper that was then exposed to light. Through one of the vagaries of art history, the Museum of Modern Art acquired several of the "Schadographs," as Schad's photograms were dubbed by the Dadaist poet Tristan Tzara, and the artist's reputation has rested almost entirely on these early avant-garde efforts. The paintings, meanwhile, have until now remained almost totally unknown. This gives a particular excitement to the exhibition "Christian Schad and the Neue Sachlichkeit," at the Neue Galerie in New York City, where they are being shown for the first time in America.

Neue Sachlichkeit means "new objectivity," and it designates an art movement that took place mainly in Germany and Italy in the mid-1920s. The term entered the discourse of art writing in 1925, in connection with a famous exhibition organized in Mannheim, Germany, by Gustav Hartlaub, a curator of some note. The title was originally to have been "Post Expressionism." *Sachlichkeit*, or objectivity, contrasts fairly exactly with "subjectivity," which everyone would have associated with Expressionism, an art of inner feeling. German Expressionism was one of the great Modernist movements, and Schad himself belonged to it before he converted to Dada. The term "objectivity" suggests that the artists involved were bent on representing things as they really appear, but there is more—and less—to the movement than that. Schad's paintings, for example, seem to be objective transcriptions of actual persons in real settings—bedrooms and cafes. They have an almost clinically photographic truth, which can easily mislead us into thinking that that is all they are.

Schad's work is permeated by the spice of sexual obsession, like the aura of religious devotion in Renaissance portraits of the saints.

In fact, the heavy spice of sexual obsession in Schad's paintings is almost like the aura of religious devotion that Renaissance painters used to transform their models into saints and martyrs, rather than an atmosphere that he actually encountered in the cabaret precincts of Berlin and Vienna. The people he portrayed, often from memory, were vehicles for metaphoric transformation. "My pictures are never illustrative," he wrote in a caption for his 1927 masterpiece, *Self-Portrait With Model*. "If anything, they are symbolic." That symbolism gives these works the uncanniness of things dreamt. There are three mysteries connected with

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these extraordinary works: how anyone who made the photograms could have made them; why, after the brief period in which he achieved greatness in the late 1920s, Schad did nothing of significance for the remainder of his long life; and, finally and most important, the mystery of these amazing pictures themselves. To explain that, we need to relate them somewhat to the Schadographs, which belong to an earlier moment of Schad's life.

As a young man, Schad left Germany for Switzerland in 1915, ostensibly for reasons of health, but mainly in order not to be called up as part of Germany's war effort. There he fell in with the Zurich Dadaists. Little of his art from the Dada years survives, apart from the Schadographs, some woodcut prints and a few posters, but Dada art was in its nature fairly ephemeral and deliberately minor, which has in part to do with the movement's refusal to make aesthetically ingratiating art. Dada's aim was indeed the suppression of beauty, since beauty was among the values venerated by the class responsible for the so-called Great War. Why should we make beauty for a society capable of that? The repudiation of beauty was thus a form of moral protest, not unlike the decision by the women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* to politicize sex by withholding it until their men stopped making war. So while the cannons pounded and millions of young men died elsewhere in Europe, Dada indulged in willful buffoonery. By turning themselves into artist-clowns, they rejected the role of artist-heroes, refusing to be complicit in the value scheme of the warmakers. I regard this as having had the incidental consequence of a major philosophical contribution—perhaps the main philosophical contribution made by art in the twentieth century. Dada demonstrated that something can be art without being beautiful, a notion that would at the turn of the century have been considered philosophically incoherent. And it had the consequence of politicizing beauty, which made Dada the forerunner of the anti-aesthetic tendency of so much of contemporary art, with its implied edge of political critique. The Schadographs are almost paradigms of anti-aestheticism, whatever further interest they may have for the history of photography or, for the matter, of abstraction.

The contempt that Zurich Dada displayed toward the society that had produced the wholesale slaughter of the Great War continued after the Armistice, as members of the movement sought to involve themselves in a form of art that might help effect political change. Dada also challenged the tendency of German culture to elevate the artist—The Artist—to the status of a quasi-divine hero, and perhaps it was this cultural disposition that explains why Dada was essentially a German phenomenon, even though not all its members were German nationals. Posters in the First International Dada Exhibition in Berlin (1920) proclaim the death of art, but what they meant was that art as it had been exalted by German culture was dead.

Schad's realism had nothing in common with George Grosz's; his paintings were a form of wish-fulfillment, not social criticism.

The most distinctive art form of Berlin Dada was photomontage, which became in their hands a vehicle of social and political critique well into the Nazi era. But initially, I think, photomontage was a corollary to Dada's anti-aestheticism. Its critical subtext was that art can be made with scissors and paste, using newspaper and magazine boilerplate as its material. Its spirit could not have been more different from the earlier collage work of Picasso and Braque in Paris. It was sarcastic rather than witty. Berlin Dada made art out of images that had no redeeming aesthetic value—just what its society deserved.

Schad, by contrast, underwent a certain *crise de conscience* when he came down, so to speak, from the magic mountain of the Dadaist interlude in Switzerland, and encountered the reality of the human suffering left in the war's wake. This was translated into a change in style: The jokiness of Dada seemed no longer a suitable option. Even though Dada's vision was never less than moralistic, its anti-aestheticism appears to have struck Schad as having outlived its occasion. He was not part of Berlin Dada. Like several of its members, he found his way to a certain kind of realism, but in a spirit entirely his own. And he pursued beauty as well, almost as if, since banishing beauty was a way of hurting the society that made the war, creating beauty was a way of healing it.

One reason for realism was as old as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: to use art as a mirror "to show...the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," and in which society would see its moral face reflected. In order for that to happen, viewers must not merely recognize what they see, but see themselves reflected in it. And for some painters, this was to be the role for art in the disarray of postwar Germany.

Consider the painter George Grosz. Grosz participated in the International Dada Exhibition in Berlin in 1920, but felt the need to do something more than express his overall disgust with Germany by way of pranks. He wanted Germans to feel disgust with themselves, and so he set out to show them to themselves in an exaggerated mirror, as a means to their moral self-transformation. Grosz explicitly invoked Hamlet's metaphor: The artist, he said, "holds up a mirror to his contemporaries' mugs. I drew and painted out of a spirit of contradiction, trying in my works to convince the world that it was ugly, sick, and mendacious." His work really did show his sick society to itself. There is little question that our picture of Weimar society is the one that Grosz has left us: porcine men, rolls of neck fat beneath their tight bowlers, flouncy whores in skimpy dresses hanging on their arms, walking past emaciated veterans on crutches begging for *Groschen*.

It has evidently not been difficult for art scholars to see Schad's work in terms of Grosz's model. The article on him in Grove's *Dictionary of Art* reads as follows: "Unlike...Grosz, Schad did not employ caricature. Instead he criticized the structures of society by coolly and uncompromisingly depicting every detail of his subjects and their surroundings and by revealing the distance and emptiness between them." The article goes on to interpret various paintings by Schad along these lines, as depictions of a decadent and dissolute society. The portrait of the Count St. Genois d'Anneaucourt, for example, is described this way: "Two prostitutes in transparent dresses vie for the count's attention, while he turns his back to them and stares rigidly out of the picture." Or again, "The exposing, ugly portrait of Countess Triglion is another critical comment on the moral decay behind the bourgeois façade."

But did Schad in fact depict the details of the world of his subjects? Did women in fact wear transparent gowns as they are shown in the painting of Count St. Genois d'Anneaucourt? That is to suppose that the New Objectivity was objective in a literal photographic sense. Schad wrote: "Count St. Genois was the sort of person who can only live in a city, with all its freedoms and social constraints. So I painted him in a dinner jacket against the skyline of Montmartre, between an older, and rather masculine woman and a well-known transvestite from the Eldorado in Berlin—the latter are both wearing see-

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through dresses." The dinner jacket is symbolic rather than illustrative, to use his distinction, as are the skyline and the dresses. It is as if he painted the Count in a world that suited his fantasy, like a gift from the artist. But surely the see-through gowns and Montmartre itself were the stuff through which Schad gave objective embodiment to dreams. The painting is not a condemnation of society, except perhaps of the way society falls short of our fantasies. Schad's realism had nothing in common with George Grosz's, which really was polemical in spirit. It was hardly a mirror at all, unless a magic mirror, in which we don't see ourselves as we are but as we wish in our secret heart to be. The paintings are a form of wish-fulfillment, as Freud tells us that our dreams are.

Let's look at Schad's great 1927 *Self-Portrait With Model*. An oil painting on wooden panel, this picture has the inner light of a Flemish masterpiece from the time of Jan van Eyck. Nothing about the picture, other than its title, tells us that it is of an artist and a model: It could, for all the internal evidence one might cite, be a pair of lovers or, for that matter, a prostitute and a client. There are no attributes of the artist's studio—no easel or palette—except the large window and a single enlarged narcissus, which is there not as a decorative touch but as a symbolic emblem. The two figures are narcissists. They do not look at each other, but within. Their expressions evoke an extreme self-preoccupation. The most striking attribute in the painting is the artist's transparent shirt, fastened with an ornamental tie with tassels. It would be what we call an intimate garment, if men wore intimate garments. It reveals his chest hair and the hair under his arm, but also his fleshy, almost feminine nipples. Schad tells us he really painted himself in a see-through shirt in order to show his naked body without showing himself naked. It makes for a more interesting picture. But it is unclear that it was a garment he actually possessed: It is "a shirt of the kind woven in ancient times on the Island of Kos."

Painting a transparent garment like that is an act of virtuosity, almost an advertisement for his virtuosity as an artist. But it is not the picture's only boast. The woman's face is marked with a scar—a *sfregio*, Schad tells us, having learned the word in Naples, where he lived after the war, and where he married an Italian woman. A *sfregio* "was always inflicted by a jealous husband or lover, and displayed with great pride by a woman as a visible sign of the passion she inspired." So like the shirt, the scar is a boast. The narcissus is thus symbolic of

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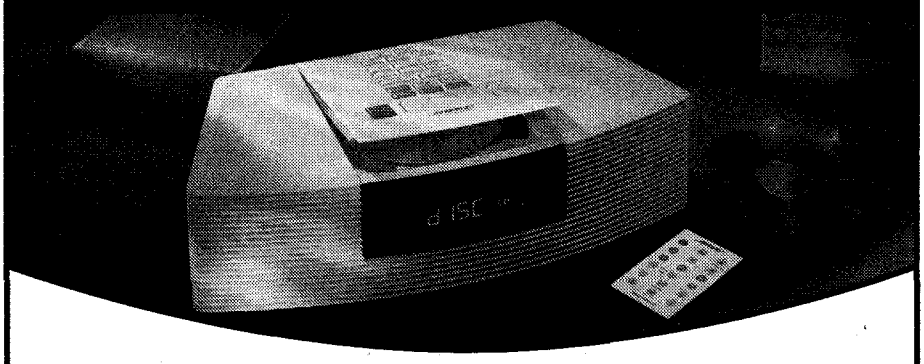

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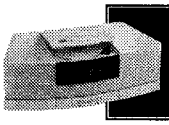

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how each of the lovers love themselves. They are proud of their beauty, and of their sexual power. Schad has neatly lettered his signature on the crumpled bed-sheet. The cityscape silhouetted through the curtain represents "a vague longing for Paris," the city of erotic fulfillment. The model's hand, according to his caption, belonged to a woman who ran a shooting gallery at an amusement park in Vienna. The painting is an assemblage of disparate realities fused into a symbolic whole. It was not posed for and painted from life.

So what does objectivity mean in Schad's case? I again turn to Shakespeare for guidance. In characterizing the imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus describes its power as, among other things, giving "to airy nothing a local habitation and a name." Schad paints, as if it were an objective reality, a sexualized fantasy that is symbolically equivalent to that reality. He showed himself and the "model" as narcissists, in order to bring out what one might call a truth of character. This is the way it is with us, he is saying; there is narcissism in each of us. We only have eyes for ourselves. For a moment we escaped from our narcissism in the act of love—but this is the moment *après*. Now we wish we were somewhere else—in Paris, for example.

The two girls, in the most explicitly erotic of the paintings in the show, are each pleasuring themselves rather than each other. One is nude, the other wears a lacy slip with one strap down, revealing a breast. Neither is an object for the other's eyes. What could they be thinking about? What is the content of their respective fantasies? Whatever it is, what more vivid way can we express the truth that we all live in our heads than by autoerotic performances in one another's company? How better to express our apartness? That is the objective truth about human beings. The Count St. Genois d'Anneaucourt stands with his hands in the pockets of his tuxedo. He is interested neither in the man who looks like a woman nor the woman who looks like a man, each of whom eyes the other, wishing he/she had something the other one has. The transparency of the garments means that we can see through to this truth.

Schad's distinction between illustrative and symbolic is nowhere better displayed than in two portraits he did of his girlfriend, Maika. Maika looks more erotic when we see her dressed than undressed, and on an imagined rooftop with the longed-for Montmartre behind her than in a real hotel room in Paris. The beautiful half-length nude, by contrast with the model in the self-portrait, was actually painted in Paris, in a hot hotel room on the Boulevard Raspail, and really is "illustrative"—that is how this lovely girl looked, with her skin "like mother-of-pearl." But the painting of Maika on the roof is "symbolic." Schad has inscribed his signature on the skin of her left arm, which is one of the few art-historical references I have discerned in Schad's work. Raphael painted his signature on a band his girlfriend, known as La Fornarina, wears on that same arm. La Fornarina points to Raphael's name with a certain pride—he is the one who did the painting that shows her beauty, and he is the one to whom she belongs in life. Maika does not perform this gesture. She is her own woman. But the two flowers, the one that she wears on her bosom, and one that sticks out on her other side, could hardly be more explicitly sexual. And the landscape behind her is Montmartre, not visible from the Boulevard Raspail. Even if she and Schad are in Paris, it is the Paris of our dreams that matters, not the real city. One can be in Paris and still long to be in Paris.

At this point I cannot resist citing the scholar in Grove, who possesses whatever eye it is that corresponds to a tin ear in music. She is describing what Schad tells us is the skyline in Montmartre in the portrait of Count St. Genois: "Through the window of the almost airless space one can see the grey houses of a working-class district: the contrast between the group and the background hints at the class divisions and inequalities in society." No: The contrast is between things as they are and things as they are imagined. Consider the woman in *Lotte*. It is "a portrait of the little milliner in the hat shop on the ground floor of the building that also contained the Pension Schlesinger, where I lived until I found a studio." He has imagined her as a demimondaine, wearing a blouse that came from the same imaginary boutique in which he found the green shirt in his self-portrait, and shown in complete self-possession seated in a cafe. The power of Schad's paintings is the power of fantasy. We return to them compulsively. If they stop compelling us, something within us will have died. This leaves the mystery of why these paintings came to an end. What was it that died in Schad, since he went on living for nearly half a century more? ■

She's So Heavy

MEGHAN O'ROURKE

BLUE HOUR: Poems. By Carolyn Forché. HarperCollins. 73 pp. $24.95.

In 1981 Carolyn Forché published a slim collection of verse, her second, titled *The Country Between Us*. The first section, "In Salvador: 1978–1980," contained eight poems about El Salvador, including a prose poem that described the poet's visit with a powerful colonel in the Salvadoran Army. The colonel served wine, lamb and green mangoes, and exchanged politenesses with his guests as an American cop show murmured on the TV; then he abruptly excused himself, returned and emptied a sack full of human ears onto the table. "Something for your poetry, no?" he said. "They were like dried peach halves," Forché wrote. "There is no other way to say this."

The Salvador poems made Carolyn Forché famous. *The Country Between Us* appeared just as America's complicity in El Salvador's civil war—during which the United States supported a regime that kidnapped or "disappeared" more than 65,000 people—seized the public imagination. As a groundswell of outrage at the Reagan Administration grew, the collection, with its vivid depictions of the ongoing torture, rape and imprisonment of civilians, sold some 70,000 copies—an astounding figure for a single book of poems by a relatively unknown poet. Inevitably, some critics saw Forché's attempt to fuse poetry and politics as damaging to the integrity of both. Others took issue with her bald shock tactics: "Go try on/Americans your long, dull story of corruption, but better to give/them what they want: Lil Milagro Ramirez...who fucked her, how many times and when." A few critics went so far as to suggest that Forché had fabricated her experiences in El Salvador.

But *The Country Between Us* is hardly

Meghan O'Rourke is an editor at Slate. *Her criticism has appeared in* The Los Angeles Times Book Review *and* The Yale Review.

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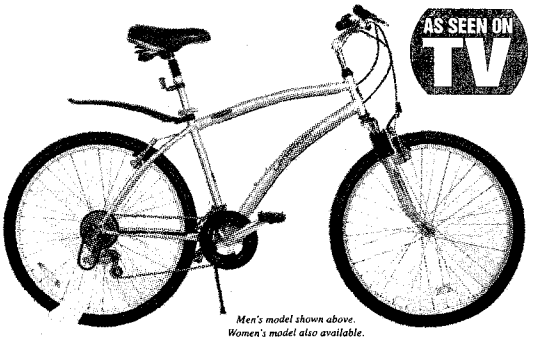

Men's model shown above.
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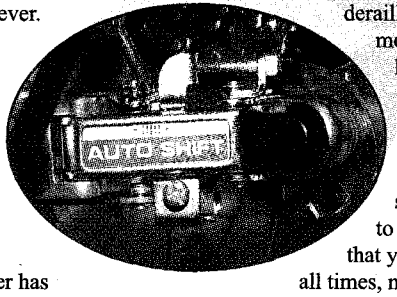

With over ten years of research and design experience, the LandRider has become the most advanced *"bicycle built for you."* There is no other bicycle available today with so many features designed to add comfort and safety to each and every ride.

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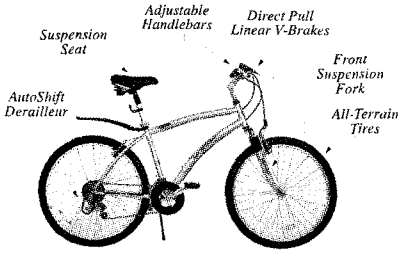

The LandRider is fully equipped with many features not seen with many competitive models.

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a collection of agitprop. In a larger sense, the book is an account of a young poet's hunger to be changed, to become adult (and her distrust of this same hunger). Indeed, fourteen of the poems have nothing to do with El Salvador; but they, too, chart the self's compulsion to understand violence, and (in the case of erotic violence) to feel it. For every poem detailing "the slip of the tongue/that costs hundreds of deaths" there's one scrutinizing "How my breasts feel, years/later, the tongues swishing/in my dress, some yours, some/left by other men"; for every depiction of brutal imprisonment there's a poem about "how much tenderness we could/wedge between a stairwell/and a police lock."

Some twenty years later, it's hard to imagine that Forché's book was attacked as it was. We are, of course, at a different place in the history of taste: After September 11 and fifteen years of reading Eastern European poets like Czeslaw Milosz and Adam Zagajewski, Americans are more comfortable with poets shifting between the personal and political in their work. And at this point, we know that Forché's portrait of El Salvador was an accurate one. Even at her most pedantic, she sounds less like a left-wing groupie or a budding Adrienne Rich than any young person who has undergone an agonizing firsthand experience for which she was wholly unprepared. The poems are unflinching in their attention to the suffering of others, but equally forthright about the fact that such social weightiness can be trying if treated with a heavy hand (as it sometimes was); throughout, Forché questions her motives—her in-

Fight Club

Writing may be fighting, as Ishmael Reed famously opined, but most writers know the difference. There are, of course, some who blur the line. Take, for instance, Stanley Crouch, one of the great pugilists of American cultural criticism. More than a decade ago, Crouch lost his job at *The Village Voice* after knocking out a young writer half his size who had the nerve to suggest that rap was better than Coltrane. During another writerly brawl, he punched a jazz critic whom even pacifists considered a deserving target.

At 57, Crouch prefers to settle his differences peaceably, but his work shows no signs of mellowing. Writing in the April issue of *JazzTimes* under the headline "Putting the White Man in Charge," he accused white jazz critics of promoting white musicians over superior black ones, in order to "make themselves feel more comfortable about evaluating an art from which they feel substantially alienated." A provocative cocktail of gruff insight and rhetorical overkill, the column was 100-proof Crouch. His white editors apparently agreed, advertising the column as his "most incendiary yet."

As it turned out, it was too incendiary even for them: A few weeks later, the magazine sent Crouch a brief e-mail terminating his contract. Not that the decision had *anything* to do with The Column. As the magazine's editor, Christopher Porter, explained to the *Voice*, Crouch's contributions had grown "tedious, generally alternating betweeen vitriolic rants and celebrations of his buddies." It's nice to hear that standards are being upheld at *JazzTimes*, but don't expect them to be applied across the board—if they were, the magazine would have to suspend publication immediately.

Whether or not white jazz critics have a race problem, the ones at *JazzTimes* evidently do. The fact that Crouch is at the center of this farce—a tragedy it is not—contains delicious ironies. A black nationalist in his youth, he traded in his dashikis for a suit in the late 1970s, and made his career lambasting the excesses of Afrocentrism. He called Spike Lee a "fascist" (the two recently made up, thanks to Crouch's puff piece on *Bamboozled*) and excoriated Toni Morrison for writing "maudlin ideological commercials." If there was any black writer he defined himself against, it was Amiri Baraka, whom he still refers to sneeringly as LeRoi Jones, the name on his birth certificate. Indeed, Crouch's celebration of jazz as the anthemic expression of American democracy is in large measure an attack on Baraka's view of jazz as a coded form of racial protest. Yet Crouch's recent diatribe carried surprising echoes of Baraka's forty-year-old *Downbeat* essay "Jazz and the White Critic," down to the rhetorical use of the singular "White Man." I guess old habits die hard. Then again, intellectual consistency has always run a distant second to getting a reaction for Crouch, a provocateur and trickster at heart.

So is there any merit to his argument? Indeed there is. The search for the great white hope is as much a tradition in jazz as it is in boxing. (The romance of black authenticity, in which writers white and black are both complicit, is another.) And Crouch's depiction of white jazz critics tracks with my own experience. The typical jazz critic is a white man in his 50s who feels underappreciated by the publishing world, a state of affairs he mistakenly blames on jazz's marginality—or on more prominent critics like Crouch—rather than on the quality of his prose. Whether white critics are campaigning on behalf of white musicians *at the expense* of black ones is another matter. Francis Davis, a gifted critic whom Crouch pillories for championing white trumpeter Dave Douglas, has sung the praises of countless black musicians—just not the ones in Crouch's Rolodex. As for Davis's enthusiasm for Douglas, it has more to do with taste than race—which doesn't make it any less debatable.

There is racial friction within jazz today—how could there not be?—but it's mostly a turf war among critics. (Among players, the racial lines are murkier than ever.) The music they're battling to define is at once more respectable and more peripheral in the wider culture. There are plenty of fine young jazz players, but little in the way of genuine innovation. Overpraise provides a measure of compensation for critics deprived of the experience of living in more vital times. Crouch is no less guilty of this, even if his darlings—Wynton Marsalis and other musicians affiliated with Jazz at Lincoln Center, which Crouch advises—are black. Marsalis may be a fine trumpeter, but he is no Miles Davis, just as Douglas is no Chet Baker.

The real scandal in jazz criticism isn't race—it's bad writing. Jazz, which arose at the same time as that other revolutionary twentieth-century art, film, has failed to generate a comparable body of criticism. Most jazz magazines are only slightly more readable than airline glossies, and serve roughly the same purpose. Whatever one thinks of Crouch's views, he is one of the few jazz critics worthy of the name. And this, sadly, is another reason why he no longer belongs in the pages of *JazzTimes*.

ADAM SHATZ

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terest in witnessing—with a savage, self-questioning sarcasm: "It would be good if you could wind up/in prison and so write your prison poems."

Soon after *The Country Between Us* came out, Forché published a piece in *Granta* citing the dangers inherent in bearing witness in verse to people's suffering—the problem of reduction and oversimplification; of poeticizing horror; and the problem of the poet's implied desire to see the world as a place of stark extremity—while at the same time eloquently defending the project. "What matters," she contended, "is not whether a poem is political, but the quality of its engagement." By engagement, she meant ethics; indeed, by the final poem of *The Country Between Us*, the poet had arrived at an ethical model: "There is a cyclone fence between ourselves and the slaughter and behind it we hover in a calm protected world like/netted fish.... It is either the beginning or the end of the world, and the choice is ourselves or nothing." Needless to say, Forché's model was: Tear down the cyclone fence. Ditch the fish. Choose "nothing" (i.e., the selfless path of the *engagé*) and in doing so become a "self." And so she argued in *Granta* for a corrective to what she saw as an overly prettified strain of American poetry about the isolated self, writing, "I have been told that a poet should be of his or her time. It is my feeling that the twentieth-century human condition demands a poetry of witness."

What happened to the poetry of witness? It was thirteen years before Forché published another collection—though during this time she wrote journalism—a silence she attributes in part to the vicious response to *The Country Between Us*. Troublingly, the two books she's written since suggest that the critical attacks have led her away from firsthand witness, and toward broad historical testimony. Both *The Angel of History* (1994) and the elegiac new collection, *Blue Hour*, wander in abstraction, and show a reluctance to employ Forché's artfully direct reportorial voice. Certainly, much of *The Angel of History* is successfully symphonic and cinematically impressive in new ways. And yet, after reading *Blue Hour*, which carries these same impulses into spiritual and personal realms, you can't help feeling that in coming to terms with the response to *The Country Between Us*, Forché somehow moved away from the very things she'd set out to accomplish. These new poems, Forché says, are about "attempting to show the voice of the soul." It's one thing to write about the

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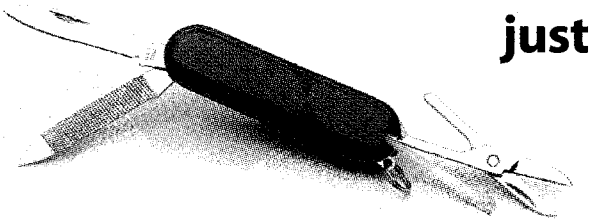

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specific wrongs of a regime; to speak in the universal voice of the soul requires another kind of talent altogether. And, unfortunately, Forché doesn't have the same gift for isolating ethereal moments that she has for creating the lyric equivalent of a Robert Capa snapshot.

In *The Angel of History*, as Forché vaulted at historical catastrophes such as the Holocaust and Hiroshima, the first-person "I" of the early poems was replaced with a voice she has described, rather grandiosely, as "polyphonic, broken, haunted, and in ruins, with no possibility of restoration"; the poems grew abstract, less grounded in the *frissons* of metaphor. Though it too is set against a backdrop of events "more ominous than any oblivion," *Blue Hour*, which contains only eleven poems, is more personal in its concerns than *The Angel of History*, haunted by family deaths and a newfound fascination with Gnosticism. There are, throughout, traces of the younger Forché: shockingly precise images of terror and grief—a boy settling into a coffin and his "cup of sleep"; "a parrot learning its language from a ghost." And as ever, Forché is capable of great and convincing beauty; the opening poem, "Sequestered Writing," is a stately elegy about the moment shortly before a child learns of a family death. The child in it, we understand, is Forché; the death probably her grandmother's:

> Horses were turned loose in the child's
> sorrow. Black and roan, cantering
> through snow.
> The way light fills the hand with light,
> November with graves, infancy with
> white.
> *White.* Given lilacs, lilacs disappear.
> Then low voices rising in walls.

In juxtaposing lilacs (so-called "poetic" language) with the scientific idiom of hypothesis and diagnosis Forché extracts more feeling from three words than would seem to have been there to begin with—and this is poetry, of the kind she wrote in *The Country Between Us*.

But poems like "Sequestered Writing" are the exception in *Blue Hour*. Although Forché's themes aren't imaginatively complicated, even the reader eager to stay with her will find many of these poems difficult to follow—they're often distant, couched in a foreign, surprisingly bodiless language. Forché seems to have been persuaded by her critics (or by herself) that a poetry of witness is more "limited," and she has returned with poems that labor mightily to mine the most serious moments of "experience" she can find.

The poems borrow imagery and ideas from Big Thinkers such as Emmanuel Levinas, Maurice Maeterlinck, Julia Kristeva, René Char and Walter Benjamin, but without communicating much. The result is moribund, as in the long final poem in *Blue Hour*, "On Earth." Written in the form of an abecedary—a poem that proceeds alphabetically from lines beginning with *a* through *z*—"On Earth" is a record of a mind slowly passing into death, while, like a magpie, it dives to recover shiny fragments of its life: "garbage fires along the picket lines/ gasoline coupons and rations, an event no longer remote/Georg leaning against the winter pine eating a sparrow." The catalogue is the ideal form for capturing the absolute disaster of loss: Loss is complete, as the catalogue can never be. Forché has learned from Eliot and his successors that a fragment of speech can be as moving as a highly wrought metaphor, and much of "On Earth" recycles such fragments—of speech, of liturgy, of imperatives and of lines from earlier poems in the book. Some of these fragments are as arresting as an unusual shell discovered on a beach, like this overheard gloss on the pain of human relations: "be gentle with one who loved you mistakenly and very much." But without more to hold them together they add up to less than the sum of their parts, and revelation never comes. This is, in part, Forché's point, but it's debatable whether the observation that lyric revelation is hard to come by is enough to hold a poem together this late in the game.

Forché uses motherhood as the lever with which she will lift the heavy rock of our moral indifference, moving from the birth of her son into memories of her postwar childhood and on to indictments of twentieth-century atrocities, including the Holocaust and Chernobyl. The "blue hour" of the title, Forché explains, is borrowed from the French idiom for the light between darkness and morning, a time between unknowing and knowing. The title poem weaves together troubled memories from the poet's childhood—leg problems that required her to sleep with immobilizing braces ("I couldn't move, and when they lifted the tented sheet covering the crib it was only to touch my face"); her discovery of her grandmother's insanity and imprisonment in an asylum ("Sometime later I would find the suitcase full of clippings: walls smeared with waste, bedsheets mapped in urine"). All this horror is set against the redemptive promise of birth:

> When my son was an infant we woke
> for his early feeding at l'heure
> bleue—cerulean, gentian, hyacinth,
> delft, *jouvence*. What were also the
> milk hours.
>
> This one who had come toward me all
> my life now gazed at the skies above
> Montparnasse as if someone were
> there, gesturing to him from the
> slate light.
>
> He looked at me and the asylum shim-
> mered, assembled again into brick-
> light and wards of madness.
> Emptiness left my mother. The first
> love in field upon field.

In trying to make us think big, she relies on standard lyric tropes for the universality of nature—skies, flowers, plants, birds, bones, fields—and sets their inevitable ruin against the tragic fact that her son must in turn lose his innocence. "Writing Kept Hidden"—which was composed when she was living in Beirut in the 1980s—begins "The black fire of ink on paper took hold of their souls—incorporeal fire" and concludes on a wistful note: "On August evenings, the sky was a blue no longer spoken." Here Forché's speaker feels not only that something has been forever stolen (an old Romantic theme) but the specific political tragedy of being unable to give proper voice to that loss. Something else is going on too—having to do with souls, bodilessness, redemption. Yet none of these lofty subjects are crystallized for the reader; while the allegory of the self's crisis expressed in relationship to the sky is an old trope (think of Keats's famous sonnet "Bright Star"), the image remains dim, as if the poet failed to look closely enough to tell us what she sees.

Moral passion usually manifests itself in certainty, and the challenge faced by the writer who proceeds out of such conviction is remembering that even the most admirable articulation of certainty does not make a poem. This is the challenge Forché hasn't met in *Blue Hour*. Poems, as Auden put it, are a "way of happening"—a linguistic vehicle for a form of discovery, which charts the arrival at truth through the form. The tension between Forché's new moral absolutism and her failure to find a compelling form for it is most visibly evident in "Prayer":

> Begin with bread torn from bread,
> beans given to the hungriest, a
> carcass of flies.
> Take the polished stillness from a

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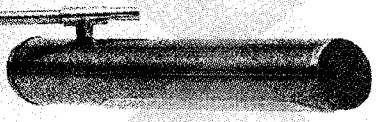

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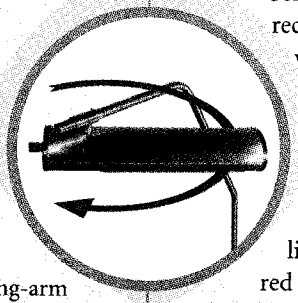

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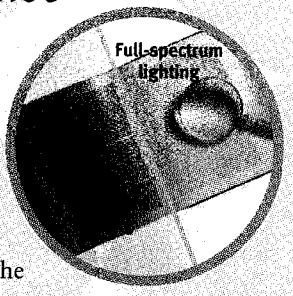

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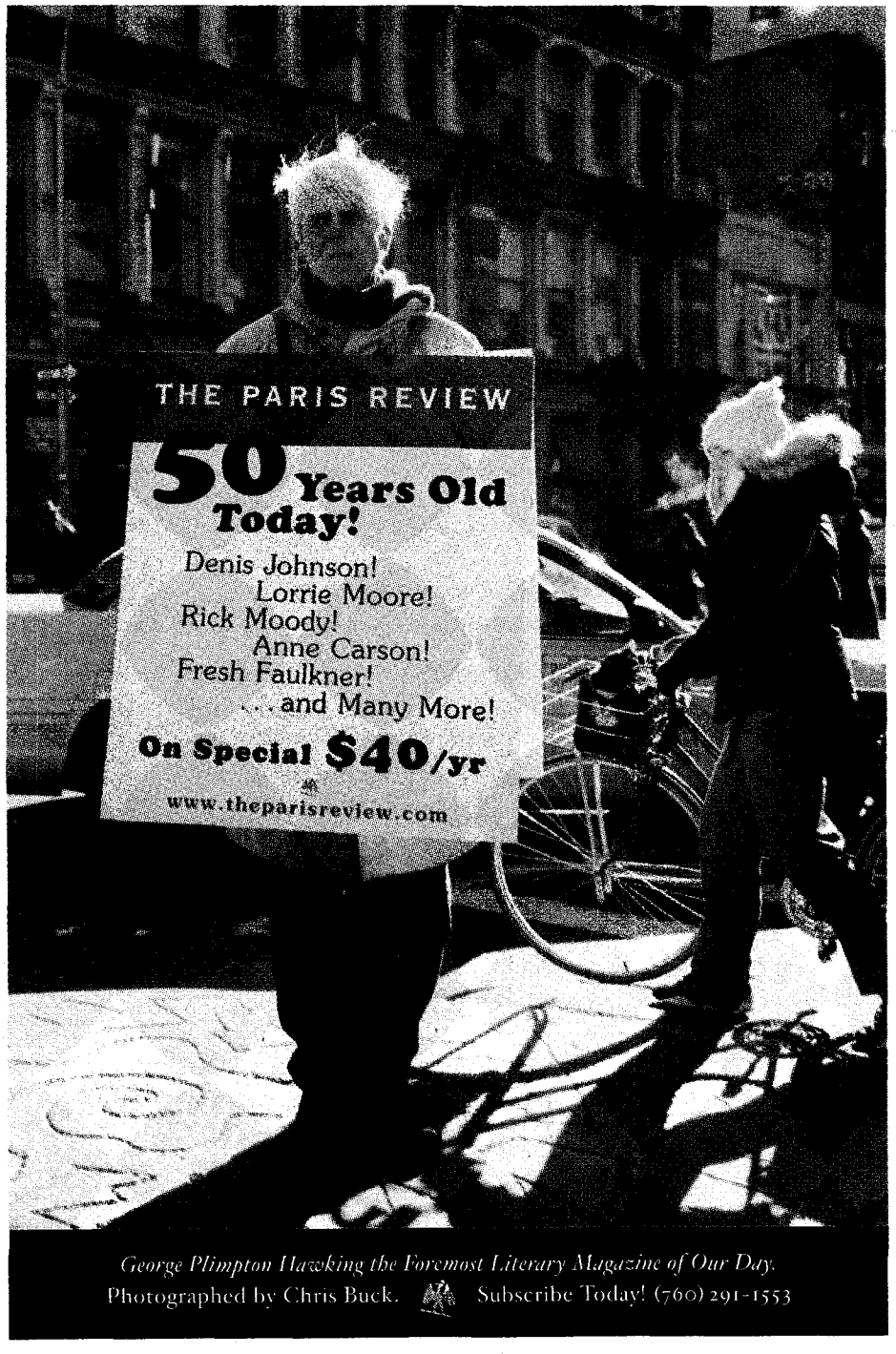
locked church, prayer notes left
between stones.
Answer them and hoist in your net
voices from the troubled hours.
Sleep only when the least among them
sleeps, and then only until the birds.
Make the flatbed truck your time and
place. Make the least daily wage
your value.
Language will rise then like language
from the mouth of a still river. No
one's mouth.
Bring night to your imaginings. Bring
the darkest passage of your holy
book.

To be sure, this poem has striking, powerful effects ("take the polished stillness from a locked church"). But it never fully comes alive on the page. Notice the preponderance of superlatives—in the speaker's hierarchy, each of us, and each of our utterances, is measured against the yardstick of universal suffering: our actions are judged in relation to those of "the hungriest," "the least among them" who live on "the least daily wage" in the equivalent of "the darkest passage of your holy book." Most prayers are invocations for relief—or at least strength. But Forché's are the opposite: She pushes us to feel pain.



Notice, too, how unmusical the poem is; how all the lines are end-stopped; how few metaphors there are; how little tension is generated by the anaphora of the imperative ("Begin," "Make," "Take"). Forché may be purposefully playing with the simplicity of the prayer form, but throughout *Blue Hour* she has confined her poems to long single lines that sit in isolated blocks on the page, as if each thought were an island we must struggle to connect to the next. These prose poems lend themselves to pronouncement, bringing out the sermonizer in Forché, just as the short lines of *The Country Between Us* helped check that impulse by moving more swiftly. The result is a stern series of pious *pensées:* "One does not forget stones versus tanks. When our very existence broadcast an appeal." And "What one of us lives through, each must, so that this, of which we are part, will know itself." Rhetorically, this last example is like scolding a misbehaving teenager by saying, "If your friends jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge, would you do it too?"—that is, it's hardly persuasive, because it's so nonspecific. Poetry speaks its truths by finding a linguistic vehicle for the poet's method of making sense of the world; it's not the poet's job to say, "I have a significant truth to tell you" but to seduce us—through sound, through strangeness—into feeling that we've become separated from the railings of the logic on to which we normally hold, and are lightheaded with the discovery of what happens when we look up.

When Forché briefly tackled the subject of World War II in *The Country Between Us*, she wrote, "You wrote too of Theresienstadt, that word that ran screaming into my girlhood, lifting its grey wool dress, the smoke in its violent plumes and feathers." Contrast the photographic intensity of that sequence with her poem from *Blue Hour*, "In the Exclusion Zones," about the aftermath of Chernobyl: "Ash over conifers and birches, over berry thickets. Resembling snow and its synonyms. Silvered fields of millet." The versifying here is elegant; the tone tempered, respectable, clever—but forgettable. Philosophical and abstract poems don't make good use of the remarkable talent Forché has for metaphor and clarity, for speaking *to* rather than *around* something.

So why have critics praised Forché for taking on the "big" subjects of World War II and Hiroshima—events that she never lived through—and criticized her for writing a poetry of firsthand witness? The latter, as noted earlier, faces an inevitable set of

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contradictions: the poet's implication in the world she's "objectively" viewing, the poeticization of horror, the naïve egotism of a speaker purporting to tell a hitherto unheard truth. But is it any more "egotistical" to testify to immediate events than to imagine historical horror? All art is a form of egotism—of the self saying, "I saw, I witnessed, I felt." The pitfalls of its various modes are different, but each mode has its own. The enduring consensus in American criticism that a poetry of firsthand witness is somehow a lower form of truth-telling than any other form is, to say the least, shortsighted.

What remains notable about *The Country Between Us* is how local its concerns were—there was no glass pane between the poet and her subjects. She wrote poems that smacked of immediacy. As a poet, Forché was the equivalent of the adolescent still in the first blush of antic conviction that the world merited closer scrutiny. That conviction has been replaced by gravity and an appearance of studied maturity. "Stress of purity generates a feeble aestheticism that fails, in its beauty, to communicate," she wrote in *Granta*. But these poems stress moral absolutism—which is surely a form of stressing purity. And they are the more leaden, the more self-consciously beautiful, the less convincing, for it. ■

FILMS

Medium Cool

STUART KLAWANS

THE MATRIX RELOADED

In the film from which there is no escape and no going back, *The Matrix*, the writer-director team of Andy and Larry Wachowski presented a grim choice between truth and illusion. The truth: We are born and die as captives on a despoiled Earth, where intelligent machines keep us drugged and confined so they may tap our bioenergy. The illusion: We wake to an alarm clock, then drive to a tall building and work from 9 till 5, after which we return home and watch TV till bedtime—all of which is a mere computer simulation, wired into our nervous systems by the machines so we won't wither too soon.

On the one hand, a nightmarish reality; on the other, a deadly boring dream. Had *The Matrix* shown these to be life's only choices, I doubt that moviedom would now be supine beneath the boots of its sequel. But the Wachowski brothers offered audiences a third, winning possibility: being cool. They imagined that a small band of adventurers—the cool are always few—had learned to pass back and forth between the dismal, industrial horror of the real world and the pristine Vancouverishness of the simulation. I will give *The Matrix* this much credit: It defined coolness precisely as a matter of this crossing over, shucking both the agonies of creatural life and the time-killing daydreams of social routine.

Of course, coolness is also a matter of style and attitude. In *The Matrix*, the performers' fallback pose was studiously unexpressive—or unstudiously so, in the case of Keanu Reeves—in the manner of people who feign indifference even to their own disaffection. Dark sunglasses added to the masklike effect. (To cite a deep student of the subject, Norman Mailer: The person who wears shades is signaling, "I can look at you, but you have *no right* to look at me." Or, in *Matrix* terms: "I'm just passing through your lousy idea of reality.") The clothes were African-American in inspiration—lots of black leather and tight black vinyl—and the fisticuffs Chinese, showing that cool people take an interest in a variety of cultures. (I mean, they enjoy turning ethnic associations into mix-'n'-match fashion statements.) The firepower? Cool to the extreme.

Lastly, I mention the special effects, about which I'll need to give some history. In spring 1998, The Gap startled television viewers with its "Khaki's Swing" commercial, featuring a 180-degree pan around jitterbug dancers who stopped motionless in midair. A full year later, *The Matrix* was released, making prominent use of this same so-called stereoscopic freeze. Considering the lengthiness of movie production schedules, I would guess this was coincidence, not copycatting. The Wachowskis must

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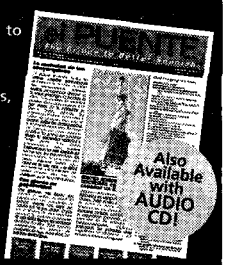

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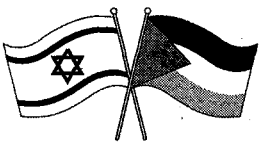
have been composing their effect when "Khaki Swings" first aired and were perhaps upset to have been scooped—but that's what can happen when a new technology becomes available and different companies find purposes for it. The innovators in this case, who deserve credit for the public breakthrough, were The Gap's then–creative director, Lisa Prisco, and commercial director Matthew Rolston; but it was the latecomers who developed the more influential use of the technique. Before you could blink, the Wachowskis' stereoscopic freeze was being imitated, even in *Shrek*.

I make this point merely to exorcise the technological determinism that haunts so much writing about film, whether in magazine articles or in the publicity handouts on which they're based. To grasp the appeal of *The Matrix*—as you should, since *Nation* people are among the most uncool on the planet—you ought to understand that this particular effect in the film dazzled people not just for its novelty but also for its meaning. Here was a computer simulation of utterly free movement, achieved within the fiction of a neurodigital prison. Like the characters' leather-clad, sunglass-guarded detachment, the stereoscopic freeze boldly dramatized the state of being neither inside nor outside a situation—more specifically, of being able to employ a technology while owing nothing to its principal controllers. An untenable fantasy, when you examine it; and the Wachowskis chose not to do so, until now.

With their new film, *The Matrix Reloaded*, the Wachowskis take on the theme of choice, or the lack of it. I draw this conclusion tentatively, since the movie is uncommonly talky yet incomprehensible. Very long, mostly wordless fight and chase sequences alternate with scenes in which characters explain what's been happening; and these expatiations sound like, "Abba gadda choice. Hava zacha power taya. Understand kala mana, anomaly sa'ah." Listen with your ears out of focus, and you almost catch the drift: The cybermessiah known as Neo (Reeves) may fight against the machines' domination, but all the while he's dependent on machines for his food, his water—even for the air he breathes. What's more, he wonders whether his rebellion has been anticipated and countered in advance, by an opponent who comes to the chessboard with far more computational power than he'll ever muster. Could the enemy in fact be playing with both sets of pieces? Is Neo's revolt a part of the system?

Not wishing to slight the world's late-night dorm-room philosophers with un-



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seemly comparisons, I will merely note that this theme imparts a certain claustrophobia to the Wachowskis' images. In one of the film's major set pieces, Neo is encircled and smothered during a fight in a tenement courtyard. (His opponents come in an endless supply and are perfectly identical, which makes the effect grotesquely funny but all the more suffocating.) Much later in the film, Neo is again hemmed in by a dismayingly small set of possibilities: He is brought into a low, windowless room, whose curving walls are made of video monitors all displaying his face. Other characters who suffer confinement include the Key Maker (Randall Duk Kim), a meek but knowledgeable figure who has been kept in a closet, elaborately surrounded by his wares; and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Neo's love interest, who takes off on a high-speed car chase only to be shut into close quarters with half of a deadly pair of twins.

As these few examples suggest, the sense of claustrophobia in *The Matrix Reloaded* has to do with more than physical enclosure. Repetition, too, makes the world seem to close in on the characters, sometimes deliberately (as when the Wachowskis multiply a villain) and sometimes inadvertently (as when they run out of fresh kung-fu stunts but keep the fight going anyway). A third limiting factor, familiar from the first *Matrix*, is imitativeness. Maybe the Wachowskis didn't mimic "Khaki Swings," but they've borrowed heavily from many other sources. *Metropolis* figures prominently among them in the present film: In the image of an underground industrial city (put together, apparently, from pieces of old merchant marine freighters) and of a cavernous temple, where throngs of worshipers gather amid the stalactites and stalagmites. The Wachowskis have also rummaged carelessly through sacred texts and compendiums of myth, since religion—any kind of religion—seems useful to them when they want a proper noun. The people, places and things in *The Matrix Reloaded* include Zion, Niobe, Nebuchadnezzar, Logos, Persephone, Seraph, Osiris and just plain Oracle, making you feel like you're scanning the name tags at some trade show in the Joseph Campbell Convention Center.

My point is, *The Matrix Reloaded* moves more heavily than its predecessor. At times, the picture even grunts with effort, as when it builds up to the sex scene between Neo and Trinity. The whole first act of the movie seems devoted to getting the two of them naked, a process that requires the Wachowskis to intercut a full-scale orgy, featuring thousands of people bumping and grinding in the Temple of the Stalactites. Dreadlocks are flung about; piercings are flaunted (by "piercings," I mean the jack-plugs that are *Matrix* cyberequivalents); and a group of primitivist drummers bangs away like the road band of *Stomp*, until slowly, slowly, Neo pushes himself toward Trinity's bed. As the close-ups loom, you might notice that Trinity has a long face, with thin lips and a pronounced chin—not unlike Neo's. Another instance of repetition: Keanu Reeves seems to be kissing himself.

More laborious still is the scene in which Neo must approach Persephone, played by the international sex goddess Monica Bellucci. In an episode that is noticeably awkward and protracted, Bellucci demands that Reeves kiss her as if he means it. I suppose the filmmaker Mark Rappaport will make much of this moment some day, when he puts together *Keanu Reeves's Home Movies*. He will note, as I do now, that the Wachowskis were fully aware of what they were doing. In fact, they're always too knowing by half. For the boys of whatever age who are the primary ticket-buyers, they supply PG-13 sex in an R-for-violence context, with the act coolly performed by a character who is neither in nor out of the situation. For more worldly-wise ticket-buyers, they provide a wink and a nudge. (Hey, we told you—it's all a simulation!) But to people who want passion and expansiveness from a movie, and ideas that are fresh rather than recycled, the Wachowskis have become an obvious drag.

They will make a gazillion dollars anyway and soon will tread moviedom under their boots once more, when they release the third and final *Matrix*. Necessity, more than choice, now rules the process (to cite for the last time the film's argal-bargal). The truly cool are few, but multitudes flock to a winner—as you may learn from Mr. Bush, another leading marketer of simulated liberation.

Do you think I've lost proportion, comparing an entertainment to a war? Then consider how *The Matrix Reloaded* continues and worsens the most disgusting feature of the original. At the end of this picture—I rejoice in spoiling the plot—human beings are murdered by the thousands, off camera. You hear about the massacre in passing; your sight is untroubled by anatomical details. A quick report is given, as "collateral damage" might be mentioned on the evening news, while the film's attention remains concentrated on the only people who matter: the stars.

Cool. ■

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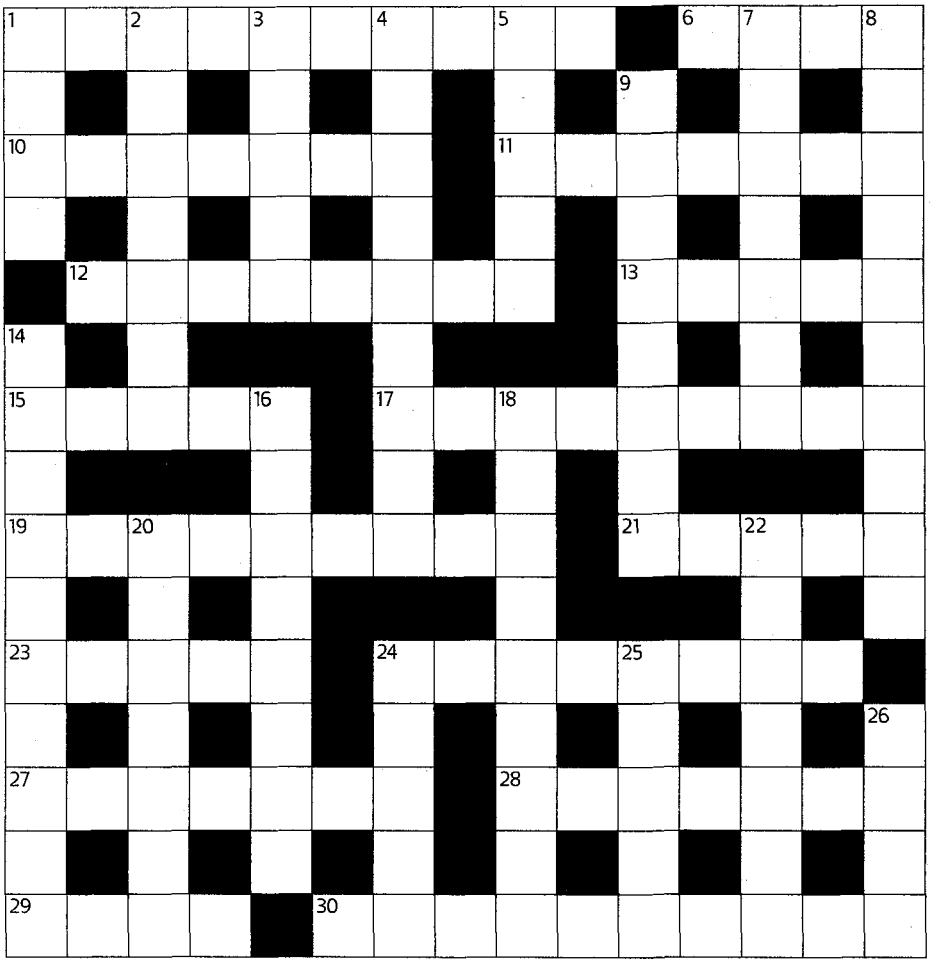
PUZZLE NO. 2896

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 and **6** Not a love letter guaranteeing a marriage—it just involves money. (10,4)

10 In return, gave a lot of racket in it, and perhaps a ducking. (7)

11 An opera that concerns Lamb in the form of Dog. (7)

12 There's nothing in a red star that explodes into what they used to get around in, at one time. (8)

13 Reasoning what should make the record 99, in a way. (5)

15 Count these, if you want to know how many are present. (5)

17 Worms of a sort, given the wrong name on what one hears are little hoppers. (9)

19 Disasters on the tennis court, which investors don't like to see. (3,6)

21 Possibly enemy country? (5)

23 A little street has perhaps a way to hide things. (5)

24 The one in blue is often heard to be the sort of harpy that runs around the ground. (8)

27 The way one might come into something when it is around the flowing Rhine? (7)

28 A medieval fiddle ends up in California with a *Vanity Fair* girl. (7)

29 and **30** Important papers found when dad ceases, perhaps, to have bundles of bills! (4,3,7)

DOWN

1 and **14** Thoughts about what the hunter looks for suggests this, and might worry one so! (4,2,4,4)

2 Fancy speakers found alternatively at a sort of "roast." (7)

3 I tried hard to be like the so-called Walls of Learning. (5)

4 Are they of Elvis, possibly—or of aliens? (9)

5 Make some comment about the freer sort? (5)

7 Much with this is given in thanks, with the "Big Old E!" (7)

8 It's one way to take the spirit out of things, but it almost sounds like PT! (10)

9 Give the thing that is worshiped a test period, and it will be this. (8)

14 See 1 down

16 Equipment perhaps needed prior to the Oxford Movement, if your understanding is enlarged? (8)

18 The state of Boston given grounds for the killings. (9)

20 You wouldn't be able to take the air without it, but it gives me a pain when pictures show up around it! (7)

22 Move the decimal, and you might have such services—which makes you feel better. (7)

24 Change of heart which appears early, though somewhat archaically. (5)

25 What we'll be tomorrow, if the landlord fills the flowing bowl, as tipsy Boers show. (5)

26 Deep sea fish. (4)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/print/hints.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO.2895

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